



THE WORD APPEARS IN THE FLESH

VOLUME 2

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ON KNOWING GOD

THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD





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THE WORD APPEARS IN THE FLESH

VOLUME 2 ON KNOWING GOD

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Preface

Every one of you should examine anew how you have believed in God throughout your lives, so that you may see whether, in the process of following God, you have truly understood, truly comprehended, and truly come to know God, whether you truly know what attitude God bears to the various types of human beings, and whether you truly understand the work that God is enacting upon you and how God defines your every act. This God, who is by your side, guiding the direction of your progress, ordaining your destiny, and supplying your needs—how much do you understand this God, when all is said and done. How much do you really know about this God? Do you know what work He enacts on you every single day? Do you know the principles and purposes on which He bases His every action? Do you know how He guides you? Do you know the means by which He provides for you? Do you know the methods by which He leads you? Do you know what He wishes to obtain from you and what He wishes to achieve in you? Do you know the attitude He holds toward the various ways in which you behave? Do you know whether you are a person beloved of Him? Do you know the origin of His joy, anger, sorrow, and delight, the thoughts and ideas behind them, and His essence? Do you know, ultimately, what kind of God is this God that you believe in? Are these and other questions of the sort something that you have never understood or thought about? In pursuing your belief in God, have you, through real appreciation and experience of God's words, dispelled your misunderstandings about Him? Have you, after receiving God's discipline and chastening, attained genuine obedience and caring? Have you, in the midst of God's chastisement and judgment, come to know the rebelliousness and satanic nature of man and gained a modicum of understanding about God's holiness? Have you, under the guidance and enlightenment of God's words, begun to hold a new outlook on life? Have you, in the midst of the trials sent by God, felt His intolerance for man's offenses as well as what He requires of you and how He is saving you? If you do not know what it is to misunderstand God, or how to dispel this misunderstanding, then one can say that you have never entered into true communion with God and have never understood God, or at least one can say you have never wished to understand Him. If you do not know what is God's discipline and chastening, then you surely do not know what are obedience and caring, or at least you have never truly obeyed or cared for God. If you have never experienced God's chastisement and judgment, then you will surely not know what is His holiness, and you will be even less clear as to what man's rebellion is. If you have never truly had a correct outlook on life, or a correct aim in life, but are still in a state of perplexity and indecision over your future path in life, even to the point of being hesitant to move forward, then it is certain that you have never received God's enlightenment and guidance; one can also say that you have never truly been supplied or replenished by God's words. If you have not yet undergone God's trials, then it goes without saying that you will certainly not know what is God's intolerance for man's

offenses, nor would you understand what God ultimately requires of you, and even less what, ultimately, is His work of managing and saving man. No matter how many years a person has believed in God, if they have never experienced or perceived anything in God's words, then assuredly they are not walking the path toward salvation, their faith in God is assuredly without actual content, their knowledge of God too is assuredly zero, and it goes without saying that they have no idea at all what it is to revere God.

God's possessions and being, God's essence, God's disposition—all has been made known in His words to humankind. When he experiences God's words, man will in the process of putting them into practice come to understand the purpose behind the words God speaks, and to understand the source and background of God's words, and to understand and appreciate the intended effect of God's words. For humanity, these are all things that man must experience, grasp, and attain in order to attain truth and life, grasp God's intentions, become transformed in his disposition, and become able to obey God's sovereignty and arrangements. At the same time that man experiences, grasps, and attains these things, he will gradually have gained an understanding of God, and at this time he will also have gained different degrees of knowledge about Him. This understanding and knowledge does not come out of something man has imagined or composed, but rather from what he appreciates, experiences, feels, and confirms within himself. Only after appreciating, experiencing, feeling, and confirming these things does man's knowledge of God acquire content; only the knowledge that man obtains at this time is actual, real, and accurate, and this process—of attaining genuine understanding and knowledge of God through appreciating, experiencing, feeling, and confirming His words—is no other than true communion between man and God. In the midst of this kind of communion, man comes truly to understand and comprehend God's intentions, comes truly to understand and know God's possessions and being, comes truly to understand and know God's essence, comes gradually to understand and know God's disposition, arrives at real certainty about, and a correct definition of, the fact of God's dominion over all creation, and gains an essential bearing on and knowledge of God's identity and position. In the midst of this kind of communion, man changes, step by step, his ideas about God, no longer imagining Him out of thin air, or giving rein to his own suspicions about Him, or misunderstanding Him, or condemning Him, or passing judgment on Him, or doubting Him. Thus, man will have fewer disputes with God, he will have fewer conflicts with God, and there will be fewer occasions on which man rebels against God. Conversely, man's caring for and obedience to God will grow greater, and his reverence for God will become more real and more profound. In the midst of such communion, man will not only attain the provision of truth and the baptism of life, but he will at the same time also attain true knowledge of God. In the midst of such communion, man will not only be transformed in his disposition and receive salvation, but he will at the same time also garner the true reverence and worship of a created being toward God. Having had this kind of communion, man's faith in God will no longer be a blank sheet of paper, or a

promise offered up in lip service, or a form of blind pursuit and idolization; only with this kind of communion will man's life grow toward maturity day by day, and only now will his disposition gradually become transformed, and his faith in God will, step by step, pass from a vague and uncertain belief into genuine obedience and caring, into real reverence, and man will also, in the process of following God, gradually progress from a passive to an active stance, from the negative to the positive; only with this kind of communion will man arrive at true understanding and comprehension of God, at true knowledge of God. Because the great majority of people have never entered into true communion with God, their knowledge of God stops at the level of theory, at the level of letters and doctrines. That is to say, the great majority of people, no matter how many years they have believed in God, are as far as knowing God is concerned still in the same place where they started, stuck at the foundation of traditional forms of homage, with their associated feudal superstitions and romantic tinges. That man's knowledge of God should be stalled at its starting point means that it is practically non-existent. Apart from man's affirmation of God's position and identity, man's faith in God is still in a state of vague uncertainty. This being so, how much true reverence can man hold for God?

No matter how firmly you believe in God's existence, this cannot replace your knowledge of God, nor your reverence for God. No matter how much you have enjoyed of His blessings and His grace, this cannot replace your knowledge of God. No matter how willing you are to consecrate your all and expend your all for His sake, this cannot replace your knowledge of God. Perhaps you have grown so familiar with the words God has spoken, or you even know them by heart and can rattle them off, but this cannot replace your knowledge of God. However intent man may be on following God, if he has never had genuine communion with God or had a genuine experience of God's words, then his knowledge of God would be but a blank patch, or an endless reverie; for all that you may have brushed shoulders with God in passing, or met Him face to face, your knowledge of God would still be zero, and your reverence for God no more than an empty catchword or an idealized concept.

Many people hold up God's words to read day by day, even to the point of carefully committing to memory all the classic passages therein as their most prized possession, and moreover preach God's words everywhere, providing and aiding others with God's words. They think that to do this is to bear witness to God, to bear witness to His words, that to do this is to follow God's way; they think that to do this is to live by God's words, that to do this is to bring His words into their actual lives, that doing this will enable them to receive God's commendation, and to be saved and perfected. But, even as they preach the words of God, they never comply with God's words in practice, or try to compare themselves against what is revealed in God's words. Rather, they use God's words to gain the adoration and trust of others by trickery, to enter into management on their own, and to embezzle and steal God's glory. They hope, vainly, to exploit the opportunity afforded by spreading God's words so as to be awarded God's working and

His commendation. How many years have gone by, but not only have these people been incapable of earning God's commendation in the process of preaching God's words, and not only have they been incapable of discovering the way that they should follow in the process of bearing witness to God's words, and not only have they not aided or provided for themselves in the process of aiding and providing others with God's words, and not only have they been incapable of knowing God, or awakening in themselves genuine reverence for God, in the process of doing all these things; but, on the contrary, their misunderstandings about God grow ever deeper, their mistrust of Him ever graver, and their imaginings about Him ever more hyperbolic. Supplied and guided by their theories about God's words, they appear as if completely in their element, as if plying their skills with effortless ease, as if they have found their purpose in life, their mission, and as if they have won new life and been saved, as if, with God's words rolling crisply off their tongue in recital, they have gained the truth, grasped God's intentions, and discovered the path to knowing God, as if, in the process of preaching God's words, they often have come face to face with God. Also, they are often "moved" to bouts of weeping, and, often led by the "God" in God's words, they appear to be ceaselessly grasping at His earnest solicitude and kind intention, and at the same time to have grasped God's salvation of man and His management, to have come to know His essence, and to have understood His righteous disposition. Based on this foundation, they seem to believe even more firmly in God's existence, to be more cognizant of His exalted state, and to feel even more deeply His grandeur and transcendence. Steeped in superficial knowledge of God's words, it would appear that their faith has grown, their resolve to endure suffering has strengthened, and their knowledge of God has deepened. Little do they know that, until they actually experience God's words, all their knowledge of God and their ideas about Him come out of their own wishful imaginings and conjecture. Their faith would not hold up under any kind of test from God, their so-called spirituality and stature would simply not hold up under God's trial or inspection, their resolution is but a castle built upon the sand, and their so-called knowledge of God no more than a figment of their imagination. In fact, these people, who have, as it were, put a lot of effort into God's words, have never ever realized what is real faith, what is real obedience, what is real caring, or what is real knowledge of God. They take theory, imagination, knowledge, gift, tradition, superstition, and even the moral values of humanity, and make them into "capital" and "weaponry" for believing in God and following Him, even making them into the foundations of their belief in God and their following Him. At the same time, they also take this capital and weaponry and make them into magic talismans through which they know God, for facing and dealing with God's inspections, trials, chastisement, and judgment. In the end, what they garner still consists of nothing more than conclusions about God that are steeped in religious connotation, in feudal superstition, and in all that is romantic, grotesque, and enigmatic. Their way of knowing and defining God is stamped in the same mold as that of people who believe only in Heaven Above, or the

Old Man in the Sky, while God's realness, His essence, His disposition, His possessions and being, and so forth—all that relates to the real God Himself—are things that their knowledge has failed to grasp, from which their knowledge is completely divorced, and even as far apart as the north and south poles. In this way, although these people live under the provision and nourishment of God's words, they are nevertheless unable truly to tread the path of fearing God and shunning evil. The true reason for this is that they have never become acquainted with God, neither have they ever had genuine contact or communion with Him, and so it is impossible for them to arrive at mutual understanding with God, or to awaken in themselves genuine belief in, following of, or worship for God. That they should thus regard God's words, that they should thus regard God—this perspective and attitude has doomed them to return empty-handed from their endeavors, has doomed them to never in all eternity be able to tread the path of fearing God and shunning evil. The goal for which they are aiming, and the direction in which they are going, signifies that they are God's enemies through eternity, and that through eternity they will never be able to receive salvation.

If, in the case of a person who has followed God for many years and enjoyed the provision of His words for many years, their definition of God be essentially the same as that of someone who prostrates himself in homage before idols, then this would signify that this person has not attained the reality of God's words. This is because they have simply not entered into the reality of God's words, and for this reason the reality, the truth, the intentions, and the demands upon humanity, all of which inhere in God's words, have nothing whatsoever to do with that person. That is to say, no matter how hard such a person may work on the surface meaning of God's words, all is futile: Because what they pursue is mere words, what they obtain will also of necessity be mere words. Whether the words spoken by God be plain or profound in outward appearance, they are all truths indispensable to man as he enters into life; they are the fount of living waters that enables man to survive in both spirit and flesh. They provide what man needs to stay alive; the principles and creed for conducting his daily life; the path he must take to salvation, as well as its goal and direction; every truth that he should possess as a created being before God; and every truth about how man obeys and worships God. They are the guarantee that ensures man's survival, they are man's daily bread, and they are also the sturdy support that enables man to be strong and stand up. They are rich in the reality of the truth with which created mankind lives out normal humanity, rich in the truth by which mankind breaks free from corruption and eludes Satan's snares, rich in the tireless teaching, exhortation, encouragement, and solace that the Creator gives to created humanity. They are the beacon that guides and enlightens men to understand all that is positive, the guarantee which ensures that men will live out and come into possession of all that is righteous and good, the criterion by which all people, events, and objects are measured, and also the navigation marker that leads men toward salvation and the path of light. Only in the practical experience of God's words can man

be supplied with the truth and with life; only herein can man come to understand what is normal humanity, what is a meaningful life, what is a genuine created being, what is real obedience to God; only herein can man come to understand how he should care for God, how to fulfill the duty of a created being, and how to possess the likeness of a real man; only herein can man come to understand what is meant by genuine faith and genuine worship; only herein can man come to understand who is the Ruler of the heavens and earth and all things; only herein can man come to understand the means by which the One who is the Master of all creation rules over, leads, and provides for creation; and only herein can man come to understand and grasp the means by which the One who is the Master of all creation exists, becomes manifest, and works. Separated from the real experience of God's words, man has no real knowledge of or insight into God's words and the truth. Such a man is a downright living corpse, a consummate shell, and all knowledge relating to the Creator has nothing whatsoever to do with him. In God's eyes, such a man has never believed in Him, nor has he ever followed Him, and so God recognizes him neither as His believer nor as His follower, even less as a genuine created being.

A genuine created being must know who the Creator is, what man's creation is for, how to carry out the responsibilities of a created being, and how to worship the Lord of all creation, must understand, grasp, know, and care for the Creator's intentions, wishes, and demands, and must act in accordance with the way of the Creator—fear God and shun evil.

What is to fear God? And how can one shun evil?

"To fear God" does not mean nameless fright and horror, nor to evade, nor to put at a distance, nor is it idolization or superstition. Rather, it is admiration, esteem, trust, understanding, caring, obedience, consecration, love, as well as unconditional and uncomplaining worship, requital, and submission. Without genuine knowledge of God, humanity will not have genuine admiration, genuine trust, genuine understanding, genuine caring or obedience, but only dread and unease, only doubt, misunderstanding, evasion, and avoidance; without genuine knowledge of God, humanity will not have genuine consecration and requital; without genuine knowledge of God, humanity will not have genuine worship and submission, only blind idolization and superstition; without genuine knowledge of God, humanity cannot possibly act in accordance with the way of God, or fear God, or shun evil. Conversely, every activity and behavior in which man engages will be filled with rebellion and defiance, with slanderous imputations and maligning judgments about Him, and with evil conduct running contrary to the truth and to the true meaning of God's words.

Once humanity has genuine trust in God, they will be genuine in following Him and depending on Him; only with real trust in and dependence on God can humanity have genuine understanding and comprehension; along with real comprehension of God comes real caring for Him; only with genuine caring for God can humanity have genuine

obedience; only with genuine obedience to God can humanity have genuine consecration; only with genuine consecration to God can humanity have requital that is unconditional and without complaint; only with genuine trust and dependence, genuine understanding and caring, genuine obedience, genuine consecration and requital, can humanity truly come to know God's disposition and essence, and to know the identity of the Creator; only when they have truly come to know the Creator can humanity awaken in themselves genuine worship and submission; only when they have real worship for and submission to the Creator will humanity be able truly to put aside their evil ways, that is to say, to shun evil.

This constitutes the whole process of "fearing God and shunning evil," and is also the content in its entirety of fearing God and shunning evil. This is the path that must be traversed in order to attain fearing God and shunning evil.

"Fearing God and shunning evil" and knowing God are indivisibly connected by a myriad threads, and the connection between them is self-evident. If one wishes to attain to shunning evil, one must first have real fear of God; if one wishes to attain to real fear of God, one must first have real knowledge of God; if one wishes to attain to knowledge of God, one must first experience God's words, enter into the reality of God's words, experience God's chastening and discipline, His chastisement and judgment; if one wishes to experience God's words, one must first come face to face with God's words, come face to face with God, and ask God to provide opportunities to experience God's words in the form of all sorts of environments involving people, events, and objects; if one wishes to come face to face with God and with God's words, one must first possess a simple and honest heart, readiness to accept the truth, the will to endure suffering, the resolution and the courage to shun evil, and the aspiration to become a genuine created being.... In this way, going forward step by step, you will draw ever closer to God, your heart will grow ever more pure, and your life and the value of being alive will, in the wake of your coming to know God, grow ever more meaningful and wax ever more radiant. Until, one day, you will feel that the Creator is no longer a riddle, that the Creator has never been hidden from you, that the Creator has never concealed His face from you, that the Creator is not at all far from you, that the Creator is no longer the One that you constantly long for in your thoughts but that you cannot reach with your feelings, that He is really and truly standing guard to your left and right, supplying your life, and controlling your destiny. He is not on the remote horizon, nor has He secreted Himself high up in the clouds. He is right by your side, presiding over your all, He is everything that you have, and He is the only thing you have. Such a God allows you to love Him from the heart, cling to Him, hold Him close, admire Him, fear to lose Him, and be unwilling to renounce Him any longer, disobey Him any longer, or any longer to evade Him or put Him at a distance. All you want is to care for Him, obey Him, requite all that He gives you, and submit to His dominion. You no longer refuse to be guided, provided for, watched over, and kept by Him, no longer refuse what He dictates and ordains for you.

All you want is to follow Him, to be around Him in His company; all you want is to accept Him as your one and only life, to accept Him as your one and only Lord, your one and only God.

August 18, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Shall Achieve	1
How Heavily People's Outcomes Weigh in Their Hearts	
People's Beliefs Cannot Take the Place of the Truth	
There Are Many Opinions Concerning the Standard by Which God	
Determines People's Outcomes	6
Walk in the Way of God: Fear God and Shun Evil	
God Makes Use of Various Trials to Test Whether People Fear God	
and Shun Evil	9
Not to Fear God and Shun Evil Is to Oppose God	
How God Determines People's Outcomes and the Standards by Which	
He Does So	16
The Various Embarrassments a Practical Question Brings About	
in People	20
Understand God's Attitude and Set Aside All Misconceptions of God	
Who Determines People's Outcomes?	
People Tend to Define God Based on Experience	
God's Attitude Toward Those Who Run Away During His Work	
People Who Run Away During God's Work Are Those Who Abandon	
the True Way	30
People's Fates Are Decided by Their Attitudes Toward God	32
The Starting Point for Fearing God Is to Treat Him Like God	35
Those People Who Are Not Acknowledged by God	37
Words of Admonishment	38
God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I	30
A. Adam and Eve	
1. God's Command to Adam	
2. God Creates Eve	
God Makes Coats of Skins for Adam and Eve	
B. Noah	
God Intends to Destroy the World With a Flood and Instructs Noah	
to Build an Ark	53
2. God's Blessing to Noah After the Flood	
3. God Uses the Rainbow as a Symbol of His Covenant With Man	
God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II	70
A. Abraham	72
1. God Promises to Give Abraham a Son	72

	No One Can Hinder the Work That God Resolves to Do	72
	2. Abraham Offers Isaac	74
	The Work of God's Management and Salvation of Mankind Begins	
	With Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac	74
	God Does Not Care If Man Is Foolish—He Only Asks That Man Be True	75
	3. God's Promise to Abraham	
	Man Gains God's Blessings Because of His Sincerity and Obedience	77
	Gaining Those Who Know God and Are Able to Testify to Him Is	
	God's Unchanging Wish	78
В.	God Must Destroy Sodom	80
	God Only Cares About Those Who Are Able to Obey His Words and	
	Follow His Commands	80
	God Is Abundantly Merciful Toward Those Whom He Cares About,	
	and Profoundly Wrathful Toward Those Whom He Detests	
	and Rejects	82
	The People of the Last Days Only See God's Wrath in His Words,	
	and Do Not Truly Experience the Wrath of God	85
	God's Disposition Has Never Been Hidden From Man—	
	Man's Heart Has Strayed From God	86
C.	Job	88
	1. Assessments of Job by God and in the Bible	88
	Specific Manifestations of Job's Fear of God and Shunning of Evil	
	in His Daily Life	89
	2. Satan Tempts Job for the First Time	
	(His Livestock Is Stolen and Calamity Befalls His Children)	90
	a. The Words Spoken by God	90
	b. Satan's Reply	90
	God Permits Satan to Tempt Job so That Job's Faith Will Be	
	Made Perfect	90
	c. Job's Reaction	92
	That Job Takes It Upon Himself to Return All That He Possesses	
	Stems From His Fear of God	92
	Job's Unshakable Integrity Brings Shame Upon Satan and Causes	
	It to Flee in Panic	95
	3. Satan Once More Tempts Job	
	(Sore Boils Break Out Across Job's Body)	96
	a. The Words Spoken by God	96
	b. The Words Spoken by Satan	96
	c. How Job Deals With the Trial	96
	Job's Love of the Way of God Surpasses All Else	96

Amid Extreme Suffering, Job Truly Realizes God's Care for Mankind	98
Another Manifestation of Job's Fear of God and Shunning of Evil	
Is His Extolling of God's Name in All Things	99
People's Many Misunderstandings About Job	100
Job Curses the Day of His Birth Because He Does Not Want God to	
Be Pained by Him	103
Job Defeats Satan and Becomes a True Man in the Eyes of God	104
About Job	106
In Job's Daily Life We See His Perfection, Uprightness, Fear of God,	
and Shunning of Evil	106
The Manifestations of Job's Humanity During His Trials	
(Understanding Job's Perfection, Uprightness, Fear of God,	
and Shunning of Evil During His Trials)	108
Job's Rationality	110
The Real Face of Job: True, Pure, and Without Falsity	110
Job's Separation of Love and Hate	111
The Kindheartedness and Sincerity of Job	112
The Relationship Between God's Consignment of Job to Satan and	
the Aims of God's Work	112
Accept God's Tests, Overcome Satan's Temptations, and Allow God	
to Gain Your Whole Being	114
The Warning and Enlightenment Provided to Later Generations by	
Job's Testimony	
Job's Testimony Brings Comfort to God	
4. Job Hears of God by the Hearing of the Ear	116
Although God Has Not Revealed Himself to Job, Job Believes in	
the Sovereignty of God	117
Job's Faith in God Is Not Shaken by the Fact That God Is Hidden	
From Him	117
Job Blesses the Name of God and Does Not Think of Blessings	
or Disaster	118
Although God Is Hidden From Man, His Deeds Among All Things	
Are Sufficient for Man to Know Him	120
If Man's Heart Is in Enmity to God, How Can Man Fear God and	404
Shun Evil?	
Have No Misgivings About the Trials of God	
5. Job After His Trials	125
Those Who Fear God and Shun Evil Are Looked Upon With	
Cherishment by God, While Those Who Are Foolish	46-
Are Seen as Lowly by God	125

God Bestows Authority Upon Job	126
Job Is Once More Blessed by God, and Is Never Again Accused	
by Satan	
Job Spends the Latter Half of His Life Amid God's Blessings	
The Price Lived Out by Job During His Lifetime	
D. The Regulations of the Age of Law	129
The Regulations of the Age of Law Are the Real Proof of God's	
Direction of All Mankind	
Mankind Is Forever Inseparable From God's Teachings and Provisions	131
God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself III	133
A Review of God's Thoughts, Ideas, and Actions Since His Creation	
of the World	134
God Personally Creates the First Living Person	135
God Does a Series of Unprecedented Works Around the Time of	
the Age of Law	136
God's First Time Becoming Flesh to Do Work	139
Jesus Plucks the Ears of Corn to Eat on the Sabbath	140
2. The Son of Man Is Lord of the Sabbath	140
3. The Parable of the Lost Sheep	148
4. Forgive Seventy Times Seven	150
5. The Lord's Love	150
6. The Sermon on the Mount	155
7. The Parables of the Lord Jesus	155
8. The Commandments	155
9. Jesus Performs Miracles	162
a. Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand	162
b. The Resurrection of Lazarus Glorifies God	162
10. The Pharisees' Judgment on Jesus	169
11. Jesus' Rebuke to the Pharisees	169
12. Jesus' Words to His Disciples After His Resurrection	173
13. Jesus Eats Bread and Explains the Scriptures After His Resurrection	179
14. The Disciples Give Jesus Broiled Fish to Eat	179
God Himself, the Unique I	
God's Authority (I)	185
1. God Uses Words to Create All Things	
On the First Day, the Day and Night of Mankind Are Born and Stand	
Fast Thanks to the Authority of God	188
On the Second Day, God's Authority Arranges the Waters,	
and Makes the Firmament, and a Space for the Most Basic	
Human Survival Appears	190

On the Third Day, the Words of God Give Birth to the Earth and	
the Seas, and the Authority of God Causes the World to	
Brim With Life	191
On the Fourth Day, the Seasons, Days, and Years of Mankind Come	
Into Being as God Exerts His Authority Once Again	193
On the Fifth Day, Life of Varied and Diverse Forms Exhibits the	
Authority of the Creator in Different Ways	195
On the Sixth Day, the Creator Speaks, and Each Kind of Living	
Creature in His Mind Makes Its Appearance, One After Another	198
Under the Authority of the Creator, All Things Are Perfect	201
None of the Created and Non-created Beings Can Replace the	
Identity of the Creator	202
2. God Uses His Words to Establish a Covenant With Man	203
After He Makes All Things, the Authority of the Creator Is Confirmed	
and Shown Forth Once More in the Rainbow Covenant	204
3. The Blessings of God	206
The Unique Manner and Characteristics of the Creator's Utterances	
Are a Symbol of the Unique Identity and Authority of the Creator	206
The Creator's Authority Is Not Constrained by Time, Space, or	
Geography, and the Creator's Authority Is Beyond Calculation	210
The Fact of the Creator's Control and Dominion Over All Things and	
Living Beings Speaks of the True Existence of the Creator's	
Authority	
The Authority of the Creator Is Immutable and Unoffendable	
4. God's Command to Satan	
Satan Has Never Dared to Transgress the Authority of the Creator,	
and Because of This, All Things Live in Order	218
Only God, Who Has the Identity of the Creator, Possesses the	
Unique Authority	220
The Creator's Identity Is Unique, and You Should Not Abide by	
the Idea of Polytheism	225
Though Mankind Has Been Corrupted, He Still Lives Under the	
Sovereignty of the Creator's Authority	225
God Himself, the Unique II	
God's Righteous Disposition	228
For Stubbornly Opposing God, Man Is Destroyed by God's Wrath	
Sodom's Corruption: Infuriating to Man, Enraging to God	
Sodom Is Utterly Annihilated for Offending God's Wrath	231
After Sodom's Repeated Hostility and Resistance Toward Him,	
God Utterly Eradicates It	231

Although God's Wrath Is Hidden and Unknown to Man, It Tolerates	
No Offense	234
God's Wrath Is a Safeguard for All the Forces of Justice and All	
Positive Things	235
Although Satan Appears Humane, Just and Virtuous, Satan's	
Essence Is Cruel and Evil	238
One Must Not Rely on Experience and Imagination to Know God's	
Righteous Disposition	239
Humanity Wins God's Mercy and Tolerance Through Sincere	
Repentance	241
Synopsis of the Story of Nineveh	241
Jehovah God's Warning Reaches the Ninevites	242
The Stark Contrast Between Nineveh and Sodom's Reaction to	
Jehovah God's Warning	242
The Repentance of Nineveh's King Wins Jehovah God's Commendation	243
God Sees the Sincere Repentance Deep in the Ninevites' Hearts	244
If Your Belief in God Is True, You Will Receive His Care Often	246
The True Repentance in the Ninevites' Hearts Wins Them God's	
Mercy and Changes Their Own Outcomes	247
God's Mercy and Tolerance Are Not Rare—Man's True Repentance Is	247
The Creator's Righteous Disposition Is Real and Vivid	248
The Creator's Sincere Feelings Toward Mankind	250
The Creator Expresses His True Feelings for Humanity	252
Five Types of People	254
Type One: The Stage of the Infant Wrapped in Swaddling Clothes	254
Type Two: The Stage of the Suckling Infant	254
Type Three: The Stage of the Weaning Infant, or the Stage of	
the Young Child	255
Type Four: The Stage of the Maturing Child, or Childhood	257
Type Five: The Stage of Life's Maturation, or the Adult Stage	259
God Himself, the Unique III	
God's Authority (II)	262
Understanding God's Authority From the Macro- and Micro-Perspectives	
The Fate of Humanity and the Fate of the Universe Are Inseparable	202
From the Creator's Sovereignty	265
The Six Junctures in a Human Life	
The First Juncture: Birth	
A New Life Is Born Out of the Creator's Plans	
Why Different Human Beings Are Born Under	_5,
Different Circumstances	268
	_55

The S	econd Juncture: Growing Up	. 269
1)	The Creator Planned the Fixed Conditions for Each Person's	
	Coming of Age	. 269
2)	The Various Circumstances Under Which People Grow Up	
	Give Rise to Different Roles	. 269
The TI	hird Juncture: Independence	. 270
1)	After Becoming Independent, a Person Begins to	
	Experience the Sovereignty of the Creator	. 271
2)	Leaving One's Parents and Beginning in Earnest to Play	
	One's Role in the Theater of Life	. 272
The Fo	ourth Juncture: Marriage	. 272
1)	Individual Choice Does Not Enter Into Marriage	. 273
2)	Marriage Is Born of the Fates of Both Partners	. 273
The Fi	ifth Juncture: Progeny	. 274
1)	One Has No Control Over What Becomes of One's Offspring	. 275
2)	After Raising the Next Generation, People Gain a	
	New Understanding of Fate	. 276
3)	Believing in Fate Is No Substitute for Knowledge of	
	the Creator's Sovereignty	. 276
4)	Only Those Who Submit to the Creator's Sovereignty Can	
	Attain True Freedom	. 278
The S	ixth Juncture: Death	. 279
1)	Only the Creator Holds the Power of Life and Death Over Man	. 279
2)	One Who Does Not Know the Creator's Sovereignty Will Be	
	Haunted by the Fear of Death	. 280
3)	A Life Spent Seeking Fame and Fortune Leaves One at	
	a Loss in the Face of Death	. 281
4)	Come Under the Creator's Dominion and Face Death Calmly	. 283
5)	Job's Pursuits and Gains in Life Allow Him to Calmly Face Death	. 284
6)	Only by Accepting the Creator's Sovereignty Can One	
	Return to His Side	. 286
Do Not M	iss the Opportunity to Know the Creator's Sovereignty	. 286
No One C	an Change the Fact That God Holds Sovereignty Over	
Huma	n Fate	. 288
The Prope	er Attitude and Practice for One Who Wishes to Submit to	
God's	Authority	. 289
Accepting	God as Your Unique Master Is the First Step in Attaining	
Salvat	tion	. 290

God Himself, the Unique IV	
God's Holiness (I)	292
1. Jehovah God's Command to Man	293
2. The Serpent's Seduction of the Woman	294
3. Dialogue Between Satan and Jehovah God	296
God Himself, the Unique V	
God's Holiness (II)	308
The Temptation of Satan	312
Five Ways in Which Satan Corrupts Man	319
a. How Satan Uses Knowledge to Corrupt Man	320
b. How Satan Uses Science to Corrupt Man	322
c. How Satan Uses Traditional Culture to Corrupt Man	323
d. How Satan Uses Superstition to Corrupt Man	325
e. How Satan Uses Social Trends to Corrupt Man	328
God Himself, the Unique VI	
God's Holiness (III)	336
Five Ways in Which Satan Corrupts Man	336
a. Satan Uses Knowledge to Corrupt Man, and It Uses Fame and	
Gain to Control Him	336
b. Satan Uses Science to Corrupt Man	340
c. Satan Uses Traditional Culture to Corrupt Man	342
d. Satan Uses Social Trends to Corrupt Man	343
Understanding God's Holiness Through What He Does to Man	346
The Tricks That Satan Employs to Corrupt Man	353
There Are Six Primary Tricks That Satan Employs to Corrupt Man	354
God Himself, the Unique VII	
God Is the Source of Life for All Things (I)	360
An Overview of God's Authority, God's Righteous Disposition,	
and God's Holiness	360
Story 1: A Seed, the Earth, a Tree, the Sunlight, the Birds, and Man	365
Story 2: A Great Mountain, a Little Stream, a Fierce Wind,	
and a Gigantic Wave	369
God Himself, the Unique VIII	
God Is the Source of Life for All Things (II)	380
The Basic Environment for Life That God Creates for Mankind	381
a. Air	382
b. Temperature	383
c. Sound	386

d. Light		388
The Daily Food and Drin	k God Prepares for Mankind	392
God Himself, the Unique I	X	
God Is the Source of Life	e for All Things (III)	403
God Sets Boundaries for	r All Things so as to Nurture All of Mankind	404
The First Part: Go	d Sets Boundaries for Each Sort of Terrain	404
The Second Part: Go	d Sets Boundaries for Each Form of Life	406
The Third Part: Go	d Sustains the Environment and Ecology to	
Nu	rture Mankind	408
The Fourth Part: Go	d Draws Boundaries Between Different Races	410
God Rules Over All and	Provides for All, He Is the God of All Things	413
God Balances the Relati	onships Between All Things to Give Mankind	
a Stable Environmen	nt for Survival	418
God Himself, the Unique	K	
God Is the Source of Life	e for All Things (IV)	426
How God Rules and Adr	ministers the Spiritual World	428
a. The Cycle of Life a	nd Death of the Unbelievers	430
b. The Cycle of Life a	nd Death of the Various People of Faith	439
c. The Cycle of Life a	nd Death of God's Followers	443
God's Requirements of N	Mankind	449
a. The Identity and St	atus of God Himself	449
b. Mankind's Various	Attitudes Toward God	450
c. The Attitude That G	God Requires Mankind to Have Toward Him	453

How to Know God's Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve

First, let us sing a hymn: Kingdom Anthem (I) The Kingdom Has Descended Upon the World.

Accompaniment: The multitudes cheer Me, the multitudes praise Me; all mouths name the one true God. The kingdom descends upon the world of men.

- 1 The multitudes cheer Me, the multitudes praise Me; all mouths name the one true God, all people lift their eyes to watch My deeds. The kingdom descends upon the world of men, My person is rich and bountiful. Who would not rejoice at this? Who would not dance for joy? Oh, Zion! Raise your triumphant banner to celebrate Me! Sing your triumphant song of victory to spread My holy name!
- 2 All creation unto the ends of the earth! Hasten to cleanse yourselves that you may be made as offerings to Me! Constellations of the heavens! Hasten back to your places to show My mighty power in the firmament! I lend My ear to the voices of the people on earth, who pour out their infinite love and reverence for Me in song! On this day, when all creation returns to life, I come down into the world of men. At this moment, at this very juncture, all flowers burst into riotous bloom, all birds sing as with one voice, all things palpitate with joy! In the sound of the kingdom's salute, Satan's kingdom topples down, annihilated in the thundering of the kingdom anthem, never to rise again!
- 3 Who on the earth dares to rise and resist? As I descend to earth, I bring burning, bring wrath, bring catastrophes of all kinds. The earthly kingdoms are now My kingdom! Up in the sky, the clouds tumble and billow; under the sky, lakes and rivers surge and joyously churn out a stirring melody. Resting animals emerge from their dens, and all peoples are aroused from their slumbers by Me. The day awaited by the multitudinous peoples has come at last! They offer up the most beautiful songs to Me!

-Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs

What do you think about every time you sing this song? (We feel very excited and thrilled, and we think about how glorious the beauty of the kingdom is, how humankind and God will be together forever.) Has anyone thought about the form humans must adopt to be together with God? In your imaginations, how must people be to join with God and enjoy the glorious life that will follow in the kingdom? (Their dispositions should be changed.) Their dispositions should be changed, but to what extent? What will they be like after their dispositions have been changed? (They will become holy.) What is the criterion for holiness? (All one's thoughts and considerations must be compatible with Christ.) How is such compatibility manifested? (One does not resist or betray God, can submit to Him absolutely, and one has a fearful reverence for Him in one's heart.) Some of your answers are on the right track. Open your hearts, all of you, and give voice to what you wish to say. (People who live with God in the kingdom should be able to do

their duties—with loyalty—by pursuing the truth and not being held back by any person, event, or object. It then becomes possible for them to break away from the influence of darkness, attune their hearts to God, and fear God and shun evil.) (Our perspective on things can grow attuned with God, and we can break away from the influence of darkness. At the very least, we can get to where we are no longer exploited by Satan, and where we cast off any corrupt dispositions, and submit to God. We believe it is essential that people break away from the influence of darkness. People who cannot break away from the influence of darkness and escape Satan's bonds have not attained God's salvation.) (To meet the standard for being perfected by God, people must be of one heart and mind with Him, and no longer resist Him. They must be able to know themselves, put the truth into practice, attain an understanding of God, love God, and become attuned with God. That is all it takes.)

How Heavily People's Outcomes Weigh in Their Hearts

You appear to have some thoughts regarding the way you should abide by, and you have developed some understanding of it or appreciation for it. However, whether all the words you have uttered turn out to be hollow or real, depends on your focus in your dayto-day practice. Over the years, you all have reaped certain fruits from each aspect of the truth, both in terms of doctrine and in terms of the truth's actual content. This proves that people nowadays place a lot of emphasis on striving for the truth, and as a result, each aspect and item of the truth has surely put down roots in some people's hearts. However, what is it that I fear the most? It is that despite the fact that these subjects of the truth and these theories have taken root in your hearts, their actual content has little substance there. When you encounter problems and are faced with trials and choices. how much practical use will the reality of these truths be to you? Can it help you surpass your difficulties and emerge from your trials, having satisfied God's will? Will you stand firm in the midst of your trials and bear resounding testimony for God? Have you ever concerned yourselves with these matters? I ask you: In your hearts, and in all your daily thoughts and contemplations, what is it that is most important to you? Have you ever come to a conclusion about this? What do you believe is most important to you? Some people say, "It is putting the truth into practice, of course," whereas others say, "Of course it is reading God's words every day." Some people say, "It is coming before God and praying to Him every day, of course," and then there are those who say, "Of course, it is doing my duty properly every day." There are even some who say they only ever think about how to satisfy God, how to obey Him in all things, and how to act in harmony with His will. Is that right? Is this all there is? For example, some say, "I want only to submit to God, but whenever I encounter a problem, I am unable to." Others say, "I want only to satisfy God, and it would be fine even if I could only satisfy Him once—but I can never satisfy Him." Some say, "I want only to submit to God. In times of trial I want only to submit to His orchestrations, to His sovereignty and arrangements, without any

complaints or requests. And yet I fail to submit almost every time." Still others say, "When I am faced with decisions, I can never choose to put the truth into practice. I always want to satisfy the flesh and want to fulfill my own personal, selfish desires." What is the reason for this? Before God's test comes, will you already have challenged yourselves multiple times, trying and testing yourselves over and over? See whether you can genuinely submit to God and truly satisfy Him, and whether you can guarantee that you will not betray Him; see whether you can keep from satisfying yourselves and fulfilling your selfish desires, and only satisfy God instead, without making any individual choices. Does anyone do this? Actually, there is only a single fact that has been placed before your very eyes, and it is what every one of you is most interested in and what you most wish to know—the matter of everyone's outcome and destination. You may not realize it, but this is something that no one can deny. When it comes to the truth of people's outcomes, God's promise to humanity, and what kind of destination God intends to bring people into, I know there are some who have already studied God's words on these subjects several times. Then there are those who are repeatedly looking for the answer and mulling it over in their minds, yet still they come up with nothing, or perhaps end up arriving at some ambiguous conclusion. In the end, they remain uncertain about what kind of outcome awaits them. When performing their duties, most people tend to want to know definitive answers to the following questions: "What will my outcome be? Can I walk this path right up to its end? What is God's attitude toward humanity?" Some even worry thusly: "In the past, I've done some things, and I've said some things; I've been disobedient to God, I've committed actions that have betrayed God, and, in certain instances, I failed to satisfy God, I hurt His feelings, and I disappointed Him and made Him hate me and loathe me. Perhaps, therefore, my outcome is unknown." It would be fair to say that most people feel uneasy about their own outcome. No one dares say, "I feel, with one hundred percent certainty, that I will be a survivor; I am one hundred percent certain that I can satisfy God's will. I am a person who is in tune with God's heart; I am one whom God praises." Some people think it is particularly difficult to follow God's way, and that putting the truth into practice is the hardest thing of all. Consequently, such people are convinced that they are beyond help, and do not dare to raise their hopes about attaining a good outcome; or, perhaps, they believe that they cannot satisfy God's will and therefore cannot become survivors. Because of this, they claim that they have no outcome and cannot attain a good destination. Regardless of how exactly people think, they have all wondered about their outcomes many times. On questions of their future and of what they will get once God has finished His work, they are constantly calculating and planning. Some pay double the price; some abandon their families and their jobs; some give up on their marriages; some resign to expend themselves for God's sake; some leave their homes to fulfill their duties; some choose hardship, and begin to take on the most bitter and exhausting tasks; some choose to dedicate their wealth and devote their all; and still others choose to pursue the truth and strive to know God. No

matter how you choose to practice, is the manner in which you practice important or not? (No, it is not.) How then do we explain this "unimportance"? If the method of practice is not important, then what is? (Outward good behavior is not representative of putting the truth into practice.) (The thoughts of each individual are not important; the key here is whether or not we have put the truth into practice, and whether or not we love God.) (The fall of antichrists and false leaders helps us to understand that outward behavior is not the most vital thing. On the surface, they seem to have forsaken much and seem willing to pay the price, but upon closer inspection, we can see that they simply do not revere God, but instead they oppose Him in all respects. At crucial moments, they always side with Satan and interfere with God's work. Thus, the main considerations here are which side we stand on when the time comes, and what our viewpoints on things are.) You all speak well, and you seem to already possess a basic understanding and a standard to live up to when it comes to putting the truth into practice, God's intentions, and what God demands of humanity. That you are able to speak like this is very moving. Although some of what you say is not very accurate, you have already come close to having a proper explanation of the truth—and this proves that you have developed your own actual understanding of the people, events, and objects around you, of all of your surroundings as arranged by God, and of everything that you can see. This is an understanding that is close to the truth. Even though what you said is not entirely comprehensive, and a few of your words are not very appropriate, your comprehension is already nearing the reality of the truth. Hearing you speak this way makes Me feel very good.

People's Beliefs Cannot Take the Place of the Truth

Some people are able to bear hardships, can pay the price, are outwardly very well-behaved, are quite well-respected, and enjoy the admiration of others. Would you say that this kind of outward behavior can be regarded as putting the truth into practice? Could one determine that such people are satisfying God's will? Why is it that time and time again people see such individuals and think that they are satisfying God, walking the path of putting the truth into practice, and keeping to God's way? Why do some people think this way? There is only one explanation for it. What explanation is that? It is that for a great many people, certain questions—such as what it means to put the truth into practice, what it means to satisfy God, and what it means to genuinely possess the reality of the truth—are not very clear. Thus, there are some people who are often deceived by those who outwardly seem spiritual, noble, lofty, and great. As for people who can speak eloquently of letters and doctrines, and whose speech and actions seem worthy of admiration, those who are deceived by them have never looked at the essence of their actions, the principles behind their deeds, or what their goals are. Moreover, they have never looked at whether these people truly submit to God, nor have they ever determined whether or not these people genuinely fear God and shun evil. They have never discerned the essence of the humanity of these people.

Rather, beginning with the first step of getting acquainted with them, they have, little by little, come to admire and venerate these people, and in the end, these people become their idols. Furthermore, in some people's minds, the idols whom they worship—and who they believe can abandon their families and jobs, and who seem superficially able to pay the price—are the ones who are truly satisfying God and who can really attain good outcomes and good destinations. In their minds, these idols are the ones whom God praises. What causes them to believe such a thing? What is the essence of this issue? What are the consequences it can lead to? Let us first discuss the matter of its essence.

Essentially, these issues regarding people's viewpoints, their methods of practice, which principles of practice they choose to adopt, and what they each tend to focus on have nothing to do with God's demands of humankind. Whether people focus on shallow matters or profound issues, or on letters and doctrines or reality, they do not adhere to that which they should adhere to most, nor do they know that which they most should know. The reason for this is that people do not like the truth at all; as such, they are not willing to put time and effort into seeking out and putting into practice the principles of practice found in God's utterances. Instead, they prefer to use shortcuts, summing up what they understand and know to be good practice and good behavior; this summary then becomes their own goal to pursue, which they take as truth to be practiced. The direct consequence of this is that people use human good behavior as a substitute for putting the truth into practice, which also satisfies their desire to curry favor with God. This gives them capital with which to contend with the truth, which they also use to reason and compete with God. At the same time, people also unscrupulously put God aside, placing the idols they admire in His stead. There is only one root cause which makes people have such ignorant actions and viewpoints, or one-sided opinions and practices—and today I will tell you about it: The reason is that, although people may follow God, pray to Him every day, and read His utterances every day, they do not actually understand His will. Herein lies the root of the problem. If someone understood God's heart and knew what He likes, what He loathes, what He wants, what He rejects, what kind of person He loves, what kind of person He dislikes, what kind of standard He uses when making demands of people, and what kind of approach He takes for perfecting them, then could that person still have their own personal opinions? Could people like this simply go and worship someone else? Could an ordinary human become their idol? People who understand God's will possess a slightly more rational viewpoint than that. They are not going to arbitrarily idolize a corrupted person, nor will they, while walking the path of putting the truth into practice, believe that blindly adhering to a few simple rules or principles is tantamount to putting the truth into practice.

There Are Many Opinions Concerning the Standard by Which God Determines People's Outcomes

Let us come back to this topic and continue discussing the matter of outcome.

Given that what every person is concerned with is their own outcome, do you know how God determines that outcome? In what manner does God determine someone's outcome? Moreover, what sort of standard does He employ to determine it? When a person's outcome still has yet to be determined, what does God do to reveal it? Does anyone know? As I said a moment ago, there are some who have already spent a very long time researching God's words in an effort to seek out clues about people's outcomes, about the categories into which these outcomes are divided, and about the various outcomes awaiting different kinds of people. They also hope to find out how God's word dictates people's outcomes, what sort of standard He uses, and exactly how He determines a person's outcome. In the end, however, these people never manage to find any answers. In actual fact, there is precious little said on the matter among God's utterances. Why is this? So long as people's outcomes are yet to be revealed, God does not wish to tell anyone what is going to happen in the end, nor does He want to inform anyone of their destination ahead of time—because doing so would not be of any benefit to humanity. Here and now, I only want to tell you about the manner in which God determines people's outcomes, about the principles He employs in His work to determine and to manifest these outcomes, and about the standard He uses to determine whether or not someone can survive. Are these not the questions over which you are most concerned? So then, how do people believe God determines people's outcomes? You mentioned part of it just now: Some of you said it has to do with doing one's duties faithfully and expending for God; some said it is about submitting to God and satisfying Him; some said a factor is being at God's mercy; and some said the key is to keep a low profile.... When you put these truths into practice, and when you practice in accordance with the principles you believe to be right, do you know what God thinks? Have you ever considered whether or not going on like this is satisfying His will? Does it meet His standard? Does it cater to His demands? I believe that most people do not really give these questions much thought. They just mechanically apply a portion of God's word, or a portion of the sermons, or the standards of certain spiritual figures whom they idolize, forcing themselves to do this and that. They believe that this is the correct way, so they keep adhering to it and doing it, no matter what happens in the end. Some people think, "I've had faith for so many years; I've always practiced this way. I feel like I have really satisfied God, and I also feel like I've gotten a lot out of it. This is because I have come to understand many truths during this time, as well as many things I did not understand before. Specifically, many of my ideas and views have changed, my life values have changed enormously, and I now have a pretty good understanding of this world." Such people believe that this is a harvest, and that it is the final result of God's work for humanity. In your opinion, with these standards and all of your practices taken together, are you satisfying God's will? Some of you will say with all certainty, "Of course! We are practicing according to God's word; we are practicing according to what the Above preached and communicated. We are always doing our duties and constantly following God, and we have never left Him. We therefore can say with complete confidence that we are satisfying God. No matter how much we understand of His intentions, and no matter how much we comprehend of His word, we have always been on the path of seeking to be compatible with God. As long as we act correctly, and practice correctly, then we are bound to achieve the right result." What do you think about this perspective? Is it right? There might also be some who say, "I've never thought about these things before. I just think that as long as I keep fulfilling my duty and acting in line with the requirements of God's utterances, then I can survive. I have never considered the question of whether I can satisfy God's heart, nor have I ever considered whether I am meeting the standard He has set forth. Since God has never told me or provided me with any clear instructions, I believe that as long as I keep working and do not stop, then God will be satisfied and shouldn't make any additional demands of me." Are these beliefs correct? As far as I am concerned, this way of practicing, this way of thinking, and these viewpoints all entail fantasies, as well as a bit of blindness. Perhaps My saying this causes some of you to feel a little disheartened, thinking, "Blindness? If this is blindness, then our hope for salvation and survival is very small and uncertain, isn't it? By putting it that way, aren't You pouring cold water on us?" No matter what you believe, the things I say and do are not meant to make you feel as if cold water were being poured on you. Rather, they are meant to improve your understanding of God's intentions and increase your grasp on what He is thinking, what He wants to accomplish, what kinds of people He likes, what He loathes, what He despises, what type of person He wishes to gain, and what type of person He spurns. They are meant to give your minds clarity and to give you a clear understanding of just how far the actions and thoughts of each and every one of you have strayed from the standard required by God. Is it very necessary to discuss these topics? Because I know you have had faith for so long, and have listened to so much preaching, but these are precisely the things that you lack the most. Although you have recorded every truth in your notebooks, and have memorized and engraved in your hearts some of the things which you personally believe to be important, and though you plan to use these things to satisfy God during your practice, to use them when you find yourselves in need, to use them to get through the difficult times that lie ahead, or simply to let these things accompany you while you live your lives, as far as I am concerned, regardless of how you do it, if you are just doing it, this is not so important. What, then, is very important? It is that while you are practicing, you must know deep down, with absolute certainty, whether or not everything you are doing—every single deed—is in keeping with what God wants, and whether or not all your actions, all your thoughts, and the results and goal you wish to achieve actually satisfy God's will and

cater to His demands, as well as whether or not He approves of them. These are what are very important.

Walk in the Way of God: Fear God and Shun Evil

There is a saying you should take note of. I believe this saying is very important, because for Me, it comes to mind countless times every single day. Why is that? It is because every time I am faced with someone, every time I hear someone's story, and every time I hear of a person's experience or testimony of believing in God, I always use this saying to determine in My heart whether or not this individual is the type of person God wants and the type of person God likes. So, then: what is this saying? I now have you all on the edges of your seats. When I reveal the saying, perhaps you will feel disappointed, because there are some who have been paying it lip service for many years. I, however, have never once paid it any lip service at all. This saying resides in My heart. So, what is this saying? It is this: "Walk in the way of God: Fear God and shun evil." Is this not an exceedingly simple phrase? Nevertheless, despite its simplicity, people who genuinely have a deep understanding of these words will feel that they carry great weight, that this saying is very valuable for one's practice, that it is a line from the language of life containing the reality of the truth, that it represents a lifelong objective for those seeking to satisfy God, and that it is a lifelong way which anyone considerate of God's intentions should follow. So, what do you think: Is this saying not the truth? Does it or does it not have such significance? Also, perhaps some of you are thinking about this saying, and trying to figure it out, and perhaps there are some of you who even feel doubtful about it: Is this saying very important? Is it very important? Is it necessary to emphasize it so much? There may also be some of you who do not much like this saying, because you think that taking God's way and distilling it into this one saying is too much of an oversimplification. To take all that God said and boil it down to one saying—would that not be making God out to be a bit too insignificant? Is that how it is? It could be that most of you do not fully understand the profound significance of these words. Though you have all made a note of it, you have no intention of storing this saying in your hearts; you have simply written it down in your notebooks to revisit and ponder in your spare time. Some of you will not even bother to memorize this saying, let alone attempt to put it to good use. Why, though, do I wish to mention this saying? Regardless of your perspective and no matter what you think, I had to mention this saying, for it is extremely relevant to how God determines people's outcomes. No matter what your current understanding of this saying is or how you treat it, I will still tell you this: If people can put the words of this saying into practice and experience them, and achieve the standard of fearing God and shunning evil, then they are assured to be survivors and are certain to have good outcomes. If, however, you cannot meet the standard laid out by this saying, then it can be said that your outcome is an unknown. Thus, I speak to you about this saying for your own mental preparation, and so that you

will know what kind of standard God uses to measure you. As I just told you, this saying is extremely relevant to God's salvation of humanity, as well as to how He determines people's outcomes. In what way is it relevant? You would really like to know, so we will talk about it today.

God Makes Use of Various Trials to Test Whether People Fear God and Shun Evil

In every age of God's work, He bestows some words upon people and tells them of some truths. These truths serve as the way people should adhere to, the way they should walk in, the way that enables them to fear God and shun evil, and the way that people should put into practice and adhere to in their lives and over the course of their life journeys. It is for these reasons that God expresses these utterances to humanity. These words that come from God should be adhered to by people, and to adhere to them is to receive life. If a person does not adhere to them, does not put them into practice, and does not live out God's words in their life, then this person is not putting the truth into practice. Furthermore, if people are not putting the truth into practice, then they are not fearing God and shunning evil, nor can they satisfy God. People who are incapable of satisfying God cannot receive His praise, and such people have no outcome. So, how, then, in the course of His work, does God determine a person's outcome? What methods does God use to determine a person's outcome? Perhaps you are still a bit fuzzy on this at the moment, but when I tell you of the process, it will become quite clear, because a lot of you have already experienced it yourselves.

Over the course of His work, ever since the beginning, God has set out trials for every person—or you could say, every person who follows Him—and these trials come in various sizes. There are those who have experienced the trial of being rejected by their families, those who have experienced the trial of adverse environments, those who have experienced the trial of being arrested and tortured, those who have experienced the trial of being faced with choices, and those who have faced the trials of money and status. Generally speaking, each of you has faced all manner of trials. Why does God work like this? Why does He treat everyone this way? What sort of result does He seek? Here is the point I wish to communicate to you: God wants to see whether or not this person is the type who fears Him and shuns evil. What this means is that when God is giving you a trial, and facing you with some circumstance or other, His intention is to test whether or not you are a person who fears Him and shuns evil. If someone is faced with the duty of safekeeping an offering, and this duty leads to coming into contact with God's offering, would you say that this is something that God has arranged? It undoubtedly is! Everything you encounter is something that God has arranged. When you are faced with this matter, God will observe you in secret, watching what choices you make, how you practice, and what thoughts you have. What God cares about the most is the end result, since it is this result that will help Him to measure whether or not you have lived up to

His standard in this particular trial. However, whenever people encounter a problem, they often do not think about why they are being faced with it, what standard God expects them to meet, what He wants to see in them or what He wishes to obtain from them. When faced with this problem, such people merely think, "This is something I'm faced with; I have to be careful, not careless! No matter what, this is God's offering, and I can't touch it." Equipped with such simplistic thoughts, people believe that they have fulfilled their responsibilities. Would the result of this trial bring satisfaction to God or not? Go ahead and talk about it. (If people fear God in their hearts, then when faced with a duty that allows them to come in contact with God's offering, they will consider just how easy it would be to offend God's disposition, and that will make them be sure to proceed with caution.) Your response is on the right track, but it is not quite there yet. Walking in God's way is not about observing superficial rules; rather, it means that when you are faced with a problem, you view it first and foremost as a situation that has been arranged by God, a responsibility He has bestowed upon you, or a task that He has entrusted to you. When facing this problem, you should even see it as a trial God has put to you. When you encounter this problem, you must have a standard in your heart, and you must think that this matter has come from God. You must think about how to deal with it in such a way that you can fulfill your responsibility while remaining loyal to God, as well as how to do it without infuriating Him or offending His disposition. A moment ago we spoke about the safekeeping of offerings. This matter involves offerings, and it also touches upon your duty and your responsibility. You are duty-bound to this responsibility. However, when faced with this problem, is there any temptation? There is. Where does this temptation come from? This temptation comes from Satan, and it also comes from humans' evil, corrupt dispositions. Given that there is temptation, this issue involves standing the testimony that people ought to stand, which is also your responsibility and duty. Some people say, "This is such a minor matter; is it really necessary to make such a big deal out of it?" It could not be more necessary! This is because in order to keep to God's way, we cannot let go of anything that happens either to us or around us, even the little things; whether we think we should pay attention to it or not, as long as any matter is facing us, we must not let it go. All things that happen should be viewed as tests God has given us. What do you think about this way of looking at things? If you have this kind of attitude, then it confirms one fact: Deep down, you fear God and are willing to shun evil. If you have this desire to satisfy God, then what you put into practice will not be far off meeting the standard of fearing God and shunning evil.

There are often those who believe that matters people do not pay much attention to and do not usually mention are but minor trifles that have nothing to do with putting the truth into practice. When faced with just such an issue, these people do not give it much thought, and then they let it slide. In actual fact, however, this matter was a lesson you should study—a lesson on how to fear God and how to shun evil. Moreover, what you should be even more concerned with is knowing what God is doing when this matter

arises to face you. God is right by your side, observing your every word and action, and watching everything you do and what changes take place in your thoughts—this is God's work. Some people ask, "If that's true, then why haven't I felt it?" You have not felt it because you have not adhered to the way of fearing God and shunning evil as your primary way; you therefore cannot sense the subtle work God does in people, which manifests itself according to people's various thoughts and actions. You are a scatterbrain! What is a major matter? What is a minor matter? The matters that involve walking in God's way are not divided between major or minor ones, they are all a big deal—can you accept that? (We can accept it.) In terms of everyday matters, there are some which people view as very major and significant, and others that are viewed as minor trifles. People often see these major matters as being very important, and they consider them to have been sent by God. However, as these major matters play out, due to people's immature stature and because of their poor caliber, people are often not up to fulfilling God's will, cannot obtain any revelations, and cannot acquire any actual knowledge that is of value. As far as minor matters are concerned, these are simply overlooked by people and left to slip away one bit at a time. As such, people have lost many opportunities to be examined before God and to be tested by Him. What does it mean if you always overlook the people, events, and objects, and situations that God has arranged for you? It means that every day, and even at every moment, you are constantly renouncing God's perfection of you, as well as His leadership. Whenever God arranges a situation for you, He is watching in secret, looking upon your heart, observing your thoughts and deliberations, watching how you think, and waiting to see how you will act. If you are a careless person—one who has never been serious about God's way, His words, or the truth—then you will not be mindful of or pay attention to what God wishes to complete or the requirements He expected you to meet when He arranged a certain environment for you. Neither will you know how the people, events, and objects that you encounter relate to the truth or God's will. After you face repeated circumstances and repeated trials like this, with God not seeing any results in you, how will He proceed? After having repeatedly faced trials, you have not magnified God in your heart, nor have you seen the circumstances God arranged for you for what they are: trials and tests from God. Instead, one after the other, you have rejected the opportunities that God bestowed upon you, letting them slip away time and time again. Is this not extreme disobedience that people exhibit? (It is.) Will God feel hurt because of this? (He will.) Wrong, God will not feel hurt! Hearing Me say such a thing has shocked you once more. You may be thinking: "Was it not said earlier that God always feels hurt? Will God not therefore feel hurt? When, then, does He feel hurt?" In short, God will not feel hurt in this situation. So, then, what is God's attitude toward the type of behavior outlined above? When people reject the trials and tests that God sends them, and when they shirk from them, there is only one attitude that God has toward such people. What attitude is this? God spurns this kind of person, from the bottom of His heart. There are two layers of meaning for the word "spurn." How should I explain it from My point of view? Deep down, the word "spurn" carries connotations of loathing and hate. What about the other layer of its meaning? That is the part that implies giving up on something. You all know what "give up" means, right? In a nutshell, "spurn" is a word that represents God's ultimate reaction and attitude toward those people who are behaving in such a way; it is extreme hatred toward them, and disgust, and, thus, it results in the decision to abandon them. This is God's final decision toward a person who has never walked in God's way and who has never feared God and shunned evil. Can all of you now see the importance of that saying I mentioned earlier?

Now do you understand the method God uses to determine people's outcomes? (He arranges different circumstances every day.) He arranges different circumstances—this is something that people can feel and touch. So, what is God's motive for doing this? His intention is to give each and every person various sorts of trials at different times and in different places. What aspects of a person are put to the test during a trial? A trial determines whether or not you are the type of person who fears God and shuns evil in every issue you face, hear about, see, and experience personally. Everyone will face this kind of trial, because God is fair toward all people. Some of you say, "I've believed in God for many years, so how come I haven't faced any trials?" You feel that you have not yet faced any because whenever God has arranged circumstances for you, you have not taken them seriously and have not wanted to walk in God's way. Thus, you simply do not sense God's trials at all. Some people say, "I've faced a few trials, but I don't know how to practice properly. Even when I have practiced, I still don't know whether I have stood firm during God's trials." People in this type of state are definitely not in the minority. What, then, is the standard by which God measures people? It is just as I said moments ago: It is whether or not you fear God and shun evil in everything you do, think, and express. This is how to determine whether or not you are a person who fears God and shuns evil. Is this concept simple, or not? It is simple enough to say, but is it easy to put into practice? (It's not so easy.) Why is it not so easy? (Because people don't know God, and they don't know how God perfects people, so when they're faced with matters, they don't know how to seek out the truth to solve their problems. They have to go through various trials, refinements, chastisements, and judgments before they can possess the reality of fearing God.) You might put it that way, but as far as you are concerned, fearing God and shunning evil seems very easily doable right now. Why do I say this? It is because you have listened to a lot of sermons and received no small amount of watering from the reality of the truth; this has allowed you to theoretically and intellectually understand how to fear God and shun evil. As for how to actually put that fear for God and shunning of evil into practice, this knowledge has all been very helpful and made you feel as though such a thing is easily achievable. Why, then, can people never actually achieve it? This is because humans' nature and essence does not fear God, and it likes evil. This is the real reason.

Not to Fear God and Shun Evil Is to Oppose God

Let Me begin by asking you where this saying, "fear God and shun evil," came from. (The Book of Job.) Since we have mentioned Job, let us discuss him. In Job's time, was God working for the salvation and conquest of humanity? No. Is that not so? Also, as far as Job was concerned, how much knowledge did he have of God back then? (Not much.) Did Job have more or less knowledge of God than you have right now? Why is it that you do not dare to answer? This is a very easy question to answer. Less! That is for sure! These days you are face-to-face with God, and face-to-face with God's words; you have much more knowledge of God than Job did. Why do I bring this up? What is My purpose in saying these things? I would like to explain a fact to you, but before I do, I want to ask you a question: Job knew very little of God, yet was still able to fear Him and shun evil; why is it that people these days fail to do so? (They are profoundly corrupt.) That they are profoundly corrupt is the superficial phenomenon causing the problem, but I would never view it in such a way. You often take frequently used doctrines and terms, such as "profound corruption," "rebelling against God," "disloyalty toward God," "disobedience," "not liking the truth," and so on, and use these catch-phrases to explain the essence of every single issue. This is a flawed way of practicing. Using the same answer to explain matters of different natures inevitably raises blasphemous suspicions about the truth and God; I do not like hearing this kind of answer. Think about it long and hard! None of you has given this matter any thought, but I can see it every single day, and every single day I can feel it. Thus, while you are acting, I am watching. When you are doing something, you cannot feel its essence, but when I watch, I can see its essence, and I can feel its essence, too. So, what is this essence then? Why are people these days incapable of fearing God and shunning evil? Your answers are far from being able to explain the essence of this problem, nor can they resolve it. That is because it has a source of which you are not aware. What is this source? I know you want to hear about it, so I will tell you of the source of this problem.

Since God began to do work, how has He regarded human beings? God rescued them; He has seen humans as members of His family, as the objects of His work, as the ones He wanted to conquer and save, and as those whom He wished to perfect. This was God's attitude toward humanity at the outset of His work. What, though, was humanity's attitude toward God at that time? God was unfamiliar to humans, and they regarded God as a stranger. It could be said that their attitude toward God did not reap the right results, and that they did not have a clear understanding of how they should treat God. As such, they treated Him however they liked, and did whatever they liked. Did they have any opinions about God? At first, they did not; their so-called opinions merely comprised certain notions and presumptions about Him. They accepted what conformed to their notions, and when something did not conform to their notions, they obeyed it on the surface, but deep down they felt strongly conflicted and they opposed it. This was the relationship between God and humans in the beginning: God viewed

them as family members, yet they treated Him as a stranger. However, after a period of God's work, humans came to understand what He was trying to achieve, and they knew that He was the true God; they also came to know what they could obtain from God. How did people regard God at this time? They saw Him as a lifeline, and hoped to be granted His grace, blessings, and promises. At this time, how did God regard humans? He saw them as targets for His conquest. God wanted to use words to judge them, to test them, and to put them through trials. However, as far as people were concerned back then, God was just an object they could use to achieve their own goals. People saw that the truth issued by God could conquer and save them, that they had an opportunity to obtain the things they wanted from Him, as well as attain the destinations that they wanted. Because of this, a tiny bit of sincerity formed in their hearts, and they became willing to follow this God. Time passed, and due to their having gained some superficial and doctrinal knowledge of God, it could even be said that humans were beginning to grow "familiar" with God and the words He said, His preaching, the truths He issued forth, and His work. They were therefore under the misapprehension that God was no longer unfamiliar, and that they had already set foot upon the path of becoming compatible with God. By now, people have listened to a lot of sermons on the truth and have experienced a great deal of God's work. Nevertheless, because of the interference and obstruction caused by many different factors and circumstances, most people cannot succeed in putting the truth into practice, nor are they able to satisfy God. People have grown increasingly slack and are increasingly lacking in confidence. They have a growing sense that their own outcomes are unknown. They do not dare to come up with any extravagant ideas, and they do not seek to make progress; they just reluctantly follow along, going forward, step by step. With regard to the present state of humans, what is God's attitude toward them? He wishes only to bestow these truths upon them and instill them with His way, and then arrange various circumstances in order to try them in different ways. His goal is to take these words, these truths, and His work, and bring about an outcome whereby humans are capable of fearing Him and shunning evil. Most people I have seen merely take God's words and regard them as doctrines, mere letters on paper, regulations to be observed. In their actions and speech, or while facing trials, they do not regard God's way as the one that they should abide by. This is especially true when people are faced with major trials; I have not seen any such person practicing in the direction of fearing God and shunning evil. Therefore, God's attitude toward humans is full of extreme loathing and aversion! Despite His having repeatedly given them trials, even hundreds of times, they still do not have any clear attitude with which to demonstrate their determination: "I want to fear God and shun evil!" Since people do not possess this resolve and do not make this kind of display, God's present attitude toward them is not the same as it was in the past, when He extended them mercy, tolerance, forbearance, and patience. Instead, He is extremely disappointed in humanity. Who caused this disappointment? On whom does God's attitude toward

humans depend? It depends on each and every person who follows Him. Over the course of His many years of work, God has made many demands of people and arranged many circumstances for them. Regardless of how they have performed, though, and no matter what their attitude toward God is, people have failed to practice in clear accordance with the goal of fearing God and shunning evil. Thus, I will offer a phrase of summary, and use this phrase to explain everything we just said about why people cannot walk in God's way of fearing God and shunning evil. What is this phrase? It is this: God regards humans as the objects of His salvation and the objects of His work; humans regard God as their enemy and their antithesis. Do you now have a clear understanding of this matter? It is very clear what humanity's attitude is, what God's attitude is, and what the relationship between humans and God is. No matter how much preaching you have listened to, those things about which you have drawn your own conclusions, such as being faithful to God, submitting to God, seeking the way of becoming compatible with God, wanting to expend a lifetime for God, and wanting to live for God—to Me, those things are not examples of consciously walking in God's way, which is to fear God and shun evil, but instead, they are simply channels through which you can attain certain goals. To attain them, you reluctantly observe some regulations, and it is precisely these regulations that take people even further from the way of fearing God and shunning evil, and that place God in opposition to humankind once more.

Today's topic is a little heavy, but no matter what, I still hope that when you go through the experiences to come, and the times to come, you will be able to do what I have just told you. Do not regard God as just a bunch of empty air—as though He exists when He is of use to you, but does not exist when you have no use for Him. Once you have such a thought in your subconscious, you have already infuriated God. Perhaps there are people who say, "I don't regard God as mere empty air. I always pray to Him and I always try to satisfy Him, and everything I do falls within the scope, standard, and principles that God requires. I'm definitely not practicing according to my own ideas." Yes, this manner in which you are practicing is correct. Nevertheless, what do you think when you come face to face with a problem? How do you practice when you are faced with an issue? Some people feel that God exists when they pray to Him and supplicate to Him, but then whenever they encounter a problem, they come up with their own ideas and want to abide by them. This means they regard God as just a bunch of empty air, and such a situation renders God non-existent in their minds. People believe that God should exist when they need Him, but not when they do not need Him. People think that practicing based on their own ideas is sufficient. They believe they can do whatever they please; they simply do not believe they need to seek out God's way. As for people who are currently in this sort of situation and stuck in this kind of state, are they not courting danger? Some people say, "Whether I am courting danger or not, I have had faith for so many years, and I believe that God will not abandon me, because He could not bear to." Others say, "I have believed in the Lord from the time I was in my mother's womb. It has been forty or fifty years, so in terms of time, I'm most qualified to be saved by God and I am most qualified to survive. Over these four or five decades, I have abandoned my family and my job and I have given up all that I had—things like money, status, enjoyment, and time with my family. I have not eaten many delicious foods, I have not enjoyed a lot of amusements, I have not visited many interesting places, and I have even experienced suffering that ordinary people could not endure. If God cannot save me on account of all of this, then I am being treated unjustly, and I cannot believe in this type of God." Are there many people with this sort of view? (There are.) Well, then, today I am going to help you to understand a fact: People with such a view are all shooting themselves in the foot. This is because they are covering their eyes with their own imaginations. It is precisely these imaginings, as well as their own conclusions, that take the place of the standard God requires humans to meet and hold them back from accepting God's actual intentions. It makes them unable to sense His true existence, and it also causes them to lose the opportunity to be perfected by God, forsaking any part of or share in God's promise.

How God Determines People's Outcomes and the Standards by Which He Does So

Before you settle on any views or conclusions, you should first understand what God's attitude toward you is, and what He is thinking, and then you can decide whether or not your own thinking is correct. God has never used time as a unit of measurement to determine a person's outcome, nor has He ever based such determination on how much a person has suffered. What, then, does God use as a standard to determine a person's outcome? Determining it based on time would be what most conforms to people's notions. Moreover, there are those people you often see who at one point devoted a great deal, expended a lot, paid a huge price, and suffered greatly. These are the ones who, the way you see it, can be saved by God. All that these people demonstrate and live out is precisely in line with people's notions of God's set standards for determining a person's outcome. Whatever you believe, I will not list these examples one by one. To put it briefly, anything that is not a standard within God's own thinking comes instead from the human imagination, and all such things are human notions. If you blindly insist on your own notions and fancies, what will be the result? It is quite obvious that the consequence of this can only be God spurning you. This is because you always flaunt your qualifications before God, compete with Him, and argue with Him, and you do not try truly to comprehend His thinking, nor do you try to comprehend His will or His attitude toward humankind. Proceeding in this manner honors yourself above all; it does not magnify God. You believe in yourself; you do not believe in God. God does not want such people, nor will He bring them salvation. If you can let go of this sort of viewpoint and, furthermore, rectify those incorrect viewpoints you had in the past, if you can proceed according to God's demands, if you can practice the way of fearing

God and shunning evil from this point on, if you can manage to honor God as One who is great in all things and refrain from using your own personal fancies, viewpoints, or beliefs to define yourself and God, and if you can instead seek out God's intentions in all respects, come to a realization and understanding of His attitude toward humanity, and satisfy Him by meeting His standards, that will be wonderful! It will signify that you are about to embark on the way of fearing God and shunning evil.

If God does not use people's various thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints as standards by which to determine their outcomes, what sort of standard does He use to determine people's outcomes? He uses trials to determine their outcomes. There are two standards to God's use of trials to determine people's outcomes: The first is the number of trials that people undergo, and the second is the results these trials have on people. It is these two indicators that establish a person's outcome. Now, let's elaborate on these two standards.

To begin, when a person is faced with a trial from God (this trial might be a minor one to you, not worth mentioning), He will make you distinctly aware that this is His hand upon you, and that it is He who arranged this circumstance for you. While you are still immature of stature, God will arrange trials in order to test you, and these trials will correspond to your stature, what you are able to comprehend, and what you can withstand. What part of you will be tested? Your attitude toward God. Is this attitude very important? Of course it is important! It is of special importance! This attitude in humans is the result God desires, so, as far as He is concerned, it is the most important thing of all. Otherwise, God would not spend His efforts on people by engaging in such work. By way of these trials, God wants to see your attitude toward Him; He wants to see whether or not you are on the right path. He also wants to see whether or not you fear God and shun evil. Therefore, whether you understand much or little of the truth at any particular time, you will still be faced with God's trials, and following any increase in the amount of truth you understand, He will continue to arrange relevant trials for you. When you are once again faced with a trial, God will want to see whether your viewpoint, your ideas, and your attitude toward Him have experienced any growth in the intervening period of time. Some people wonder, "Why does God always want to see people's attitudes? Hasn't He already seen how they put the truth into practice? Why would He still want to see their attitudes?" This is mindless drivel! Given that God works in this manner, His will must lie therein. God constantly observes people from the side, watching their every word and action, their every deed and movement; He even observes their every thought and idea. God makes a note of everything that happens to people—their good deeds, their faults, their transgressions, even their rebellions and betrayals—as evidence with which to determine their outcomes. Step by step, as God's work is elevated, you will hear more truths and come to accept more positive things and information, and you will gain more of the reality of the truth. Throughout this process, God's requirements of you will also increase, and as they do, He will arrange more serious trials for you. His goal is

to examine whether your attitude toward Him has progressed in the meantime. Of course, when this happens, the viewpoint God demands of you will conform to your understanding of the reality of the truth.

As your stature gradually builds up, so will the standard that God demands of you. While you are still immature, He will set a very low standard for you to meet; when your stature is a little greater, He will raise your standard a bit higher. But what will God do after you have gained an understanding of all of the truth? He will have you face even bigger trials. Amid these trials, what God wishes to obtain from you, what He wants to see from you, is a more profound knowledge of Him, an actual reverence of Him. At this time, His requirements of you will be higher and "harsher" than they were when your stature was more immature (people might view them as harsh, but God actually views them as reasonable). When God is trying people, what kind of reality does He wish to create? He is constantly asking that people give Him their hearts. Some people will say, "How can I give that? I have fulfilled my duty; I abandoned my home and livelihood, and I have expended myself. Are these not all instances of my giving my heart over to God? How else could I give my heart to God? Could it be that these weren't actually ways of giving my heart to Him? What is God's specific requirement?" The requirement is very simple. In fact, there are some people who have already given their hearts to God to varying degrees during various stages of their trials, but the vast majority of people never give their hearts over to God. When God tries you, He sees if your heart is with Him, with the flesh, or with Satan. When God tries you, He sees whether you are standing in opposition to Him or are in a position that is compatible with Him, and He also sees whether your heart is on His side. When you are immature and facing trials, you have little confidence, and you cannot know exactly what it is you need to do to fulfill God's intentions, for your understanding of the truth is limited. However, if you can still pray to God genuinely and sincerely, and if you can be willing to give your heart over to Him, make Him your sovereign, and be willing to offer unto Him all those things that you believe to be most precious, then you will have already given God your heart. As you listen to more sermons and understand more of the truth, your stature will also gradually grow. At this time, the standard of God's demands will not be the same as it was when you were immature; He will demand a higher standard of you. As people gradually give their hearts over to God, their hearts grow slowly nearer to Him; as people can genuinely grow nearer to God, then their hearts will revere Him ever more. What God wants is just such a heart.

When God wants to obtain someone's heart, He will put that person through numerous trials. During these trials, if God does not obtain that person's heart or see that this person has any attitude—that is to say, if God does not see this person practicing or behaving in a way that shows reverence to Him, and if He also does not see in this person an attitude and resolution that shuns evil—then, after numerous trials, God's patience with them will be withdrawn, and He will no longer tolerate them. He will

no longer try this person, and He will no longer work on them. So, what does this signify for this person's outcome? It means they have no outcome. Perhaps this person has done no evil; perhaps they have done nothing disruptive and caused no disturbance. Perhaps they have not openly resisted God. However, this person's heart remains hidden from God; they have never had a clear attitude and viewpoint toward God, and God cannot clearly see that their heart has been given to Him or that they are seeking to fear Him and shun evil. God loses patience with such people, and will no longer pay any price for them, extend any mercy to them, or work on them. Such a person's life of faith in God has already ended. This is because, in all of the many trials that God has given them, God has not obtained the result He wants. Thus, there are a number of people in whom I have never seen the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit. How can this be seen? These people may have believed in God for many years, and on the surface, they have behaved with vigor; they have read many books, handled many affairs, filled a dozen or so notebooks, and mastered a great many words and doctrines. However, there is never any visible growth in them, their views on God remain invisible, and their attitudes are still unclear. In other words, their hearts cannot be seen; they are always wrapped up and sealed—they are sealed off from God. As a result, He has not seen their true hearts, He has not seen in these people any true reverence for Him, and, what is more, He has not seen how these people walk in His way. If God still has not gained such people by now, can He gain them in the future? He cannot! Will He keep pushing for things that cannot be obtained? He will not! What, then, is God's current attitude toward such people? (He spurns them and ignores them.) He ignores them! God does not heed such people; He spurns them. You have memorized these words very quickly, and very accurately. It appears as though you have understood what you have heard!

There are some people who, when they begin to follow God, are immature and ignorant; they do not understand His will, nor do they know what it is to believe in Him. They adopt a human-conceived and mistaken way of believing in and following God. When such people are faced with trials, they are not aware of it; they remain numb to God's guidance and enlightenment. They do not know what it means to give their hearts over to God or what it means to stand firm during a trial. God will give such people a limited amount of time, and during this time, He will let them understand the nature of His trials and what His intentions are. Afterward, these people must demonstrate their points of view. For those at this stage, God is still waiting. As for those who have some views yet still waver, who want to give their hearts over to God but are not reconciled to doing so, and who, despite having put some basic truths into practice, try to hide and give up when faced with major trials—what is God's attitude toward them? He still expects a little from them, and the result depends on their attitude and performance. If people are not active in progressing, what does God do? He gives up on them. This is because, before God gives up on you, you have already given up on yourself. Thus, you

cannot blame God for doing so. It is wrong of you to hold a grievance against God.

The Various Embarrassments a Practical Question Brings About in People

There is another type of person who has the most tragic outcome of all; this is the sort of person that I like mentioning the least. They are not tragic because they have received God's punishment, or because His demands on them are harsh and they therefore have a tragic outcome; rather, they are tragic because they do it to themselves. As the common saying goes, they dig their own grave. What sort of person does this? These people do not walk the correct path, and their outcomes are revealed in advance. In God's eyes, such people are the greatest objects of His loathing. In human terms, people like these are the most pitiful. When such people begin to follow God, they are very zealous; they pay many a price, have a good opinion of the prospects of God's work, and have an abundant imagination when it comes to their own futures. They are also especially confident in God, believing He can make humans complete and bring them to a glorious destination. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, these people then run away during the course of God's work. What does "run away" mean here? It means they disappear without a goodbye, without even a sound; they leave without a word. Although such people claim to believe in God, they never really put down roots on their path of faith. Thus, no matter how long they have believed in Him, they are still capable of turning away from God. Some people leave to go into business, some leave to live their lives, some leave to get rich, and some leave to get married and have children.... Among those who leave, there are some who later have attacks of conscience and want to come back, and others who have a very hard time getting by and end up drifting in the world for years and years. These drifters experience a lot of suffering, and they believe that being in the world is too painful and that they cannot be separated from God. They want to return to God's house to receive comfort, peace, and joy, and they want to continue believing in God in order to escape disaster, or to attain salvation and a beautiful destination. This is because these people believe that God's love is boundless, and that His grace is inexhaustible. They think that no matter what someone has done, God should forgive them and be tolerant of their past. These people say over and over that they want to come back and do their duties. There are even those who give some of their belongings to the church, hoping that this will pave the way back to God's house. What is God's attitude toward such people? How should He determine their outcomes? Feel free to speak up. (I thought that God would accept this type of person, but after hearing that just now, I feel He may not.) Say your reasoning. (Such people only come before God so that their outcomes won't be death. They don't come to believe in God out of genuine sincerity; they come because they know that God's work will soon be finished, so they are under the delusion that they can come and receive blessings.) You are saying that these people do not sincerely believe in God, so He cannot accept them, right? (Yes.)

(My understanding is that such people are just opportunists, and do not genuinely believe in God.) They have not come to believe in God; they are opportunists. Well said! These opportunists are the sort of people that everyone hates. They sail in whichever direction the wind blows, and they cannot be bothered to do anything unless they are going to get something out of it, so of course they are despicable! Does any other brother or sister have an opinion they would like to share? (God will not accept them anymore, because His work is about to be complete, and now is the time that people's outcomes are being set. It's at this time that these people want to come back—not because they actually want to pursue the truth, but because they see disasters descending, or because they are being influenced by external factors. If they really had the intention of pursuing the truth, they would never have run away in the middle of God's work.) Are there any other opinions? (They won't be accepted. God actually already gave them opportunities, but they insisted on taking a heedless attitude toward Him. No matter what these people's intentions are, and even if they really do repent, God still won't let them come back. This is because He gave them so many opportunities, but they have already demonstrated their attitude: They wanted to leave God. For this reason, if they try to come back now, God won't accept them.) (I agree that God won't accept this type of person, because if a person has seen the true way, experienced God's work for such a long period of time, and can still return to the world and to Satan's embrace, then this is a huge betrayal of God. Despite the fact that God's essence is mercy and love, it depends on what kind of person that essence is being directed at. If this person comes before God looking for comfort or seeking something to pin their hopes on, then they simply are not the type who sincerely believes in God, and God's mercy toward such people only goes so far.) If God's essence is mercy, then why does He not give this kind of person a bit more of it? With a little more mercy, would this person not then have an opportunity? In the past, people frequently said that God wants every person to be saved and does not want anyone to suffer perdition; if one among a hundred sheep is lost, God will leave the ninety-nine to search for the missing one. Now, when it comes to these people, should God accept them and give them a second chance on account of their sincere faith? This is not actually a hard question; it is very simple! If you truly comprehend God and have real knowledge of Him, then not much explanation is needed—and not much speculation is needed, either, right? Your answers are on the right track, but they still fall far short of God's attitude.

Just now, some of you expressed certainty that God could not possibly accept this type of person. Others were not too clear, thinking that God might accept them or might not—this attitude is the more moderate one. There were also those of you whose viewpoint was that you hope God will accept this kind of person—this attitude is the more ambiguous one. Those of you who are certain in what you think believe that God has worked for so long, and that His work is complete, so He does not need to be tolerant of these people; as such, you think He will not accept them again. The more moderate

among you believe that these matters should be handled according to individual circumstances; if these people's hearts are inseparable from God, and if they genuinely believe in God and pursue the truth, then God should forget their previous weaknesses and faults—He should forgive these people, give them a second chance, and allow them to return to His house and accept His salvation. However, if these people later run away once again, then God will no longer want them, and abandoning these people cannot be considered an injustice. There is another group who hope God can accept such a person. This group is not guite sure whether God will actually do so or not. If they believe He should accept this kind of person, but He does not, then it seems this view is slightly out of conformity with God's perspective. If they believe that God should not accept such a person, and God happens to say that His love toward humans is boundless and that He is willing to give this kind of person another chance, then is this not an example of human ignorance being laid bare? In any case, you all have your own viewpoints. These viewpoints represent a kind of knowledge within your own thoughts; they are also a reflection of the depth of your understanding of the truth and of God's will. It is correct to say so, is it not? It is wonderful that you have opinions on this matter. However, there is still the question of whether your opinions are correct. You are all a bit worried, are you not? "Then what is correct? I can't see clearly, and I don't know exactly what God is thinking, and He hasn't told me anything. How can I know what He is thinking? God's attitude toward humankind is love. Going by the attitude He has had in the past, He should accept such a person, but I'm not too clear on God's present attitude; I can only say that maybe He will accept this person, and maybe He won't." This is laughable, is it not? This question has really stumped you. If you do not have a proper viewpoint on this matter, then what will you do when your church is actually faced with such a person? If you do not handle the situation correctly, then you could offend God. Is this not a dangerous affair?

Why did I want to ask about your views concerning the matter I just raised? I wished to test your viewpoints, to test how much knowledge of God you have, and how much of His intentions and attitude you understand. What is the answer? The answer is your viewpoints themselves. Some of you are very conservative, and some of you are using your imaginations to guess. What is "guessing"? It means being unable to discern how God thinks, and thus coming up with baseless conjecture that God should think in some way; you do not actually know yourself whether you are right or wrong, so you voice an ambiguous viewpoint. Faced with this fact, what have you seen? When following God, people seldom pay attention to His will, and they rarely take heed of His thoughts and His attitude toward humans. People do not understand God's thoughts, so, when asked questions about His intentions and disposition, you get confused; you fall into deep uncertainty, and then you either guess or gamble. What sort of mindset is this? It proves a fact: that most people who believe in God regard Him as a bunch of empty air and as something which seems to exist one minute and not the next. Why do I put it like that?

Because whenever you encounter a problem, you do not know God's will. Why do you not know His will? Not just now, but from start to finish, you do not know God's attitude toward this problem. You cannot fathom it and do not know what God's attitude is, but have you given it much thought? Have you sought to know it? Have you fellowshiped about it? No! This confirms a fact: The God of your belief has no connection to the God of reality. In your belief in God, you ponder only your own intentions and those of your leaders; you merely give thought to the superficial and doctrinal meaning of God's words, without truly trying to know or seek God's will at all. Is this not the case? The essence of this matter is quite terrible! After so many years, I have seen many people who believe in God. What has their belief transformed God into in their minds? Some people believe in God as if He were just a bunch of empty air. These people have no answer to questions of God's existence, because they can neither feel nor sense either His presence or His absence, let alone see it clearly or understand it. Subconsciously, these people think that God does not exist. Others believe in God as if He were a man. These people think that He is unable to do all of the things that they, too, are unable to do, and that He should think however they think. Their definition of God is "an invisible and untouchable person." There is also a group of people who believe in God as if He were a puppet; these people believe that God has no emotions. They think God is a clay statue, and that when faced with an issue, God has no attitude, viewpoint, or ideas; they believe He is at humankind's mercy. People simply believe however they want to believe. If they make Him great, then He is great; if they make Him small, then He is small. When people sin and need God's mercy, tolerance, and love, they assume God should extend His mercy. These people invent a "God" in their own minds, and then make this "God" fulfill their demands and satisfy all of their desires. No matter when or where, and no matter what such people do, they will adopt this fancy in their treatment of God and in their faith. There are even those who, having aggravated God's disposition, still believe He can save them, because they assume that God's love is boundless and His disposition is righteous, and that no matter how much a person offends God, He will not remember any of it. They think that since human faults, human trespasses, and human disobedience are momentary expressions of a person's disposition, God will give people chances, and be tolerant and patient with them; they believe that God will still love them as before. Thus, they maintain high hopes for attaining salvation. In fact, no matter how people believe in God, as long as they are not pursuing the truth, He will hold a negative attitude toward them. This is because over the course of your faith in God, though you have taken the book of God's words and seen it as a treasure, and study and read it every day, you set the real God aside. You regard Him as mere empty air, or as just a person—and some of you regard Him as no more than a puppet. Why do I put it this way? I do so because the way I see it, whether you are faced with a problem or encounter some circumstance, those things that exist in your subconscious, those things that you give rise to internally, have never

had any connection with God's words or with pursuing the truth. You only know what you yourself are thinking, what your own viewpoint is, and then you force your own ideas and opinions onto God. In your mind they become God's viewpoints, and you make of these viewpoints standards that you unwaveringly uphold. Over time, proceeding like this takes you farther and farther away from God.

Understand God's Attitude and Set Aside All Misconceptions of God

Just what sort of God is this God you currently believe in? Have you ever thought about it? When He sees an evil person committing evil acts, does He despise it? (Yes, He does.) What is His attitude when He sees ignorant people making mistakes? (Sorrow.) When He sees people stealing His offerings, what is His attitude? (He despises them.) This is all very clear. When God sees someone confused in their belief in Him, who is in no way pursuing the truth, what is God's attitude? You are not quite sure, are you? "Confusion," as an attitude, is not a sin, nor does it offend God, and people feel that it is not a sort of major mistake. So, tell Me—what is God's attitude in this case? (He is unwilling to acknowledge them.) "Unwillingness to acknowledge"—what sort of attitude is this? It means God looks down on these people and scorns them! The way He deals with such people is to give them the cold shoulder. God's approach is to set them aside, not engaging in any work on them, and this includes the work of enlightenment, illumination, chastening, and discipline. Such people are simply not counted in God's work. What is God's attitude toward those who aggravate His disposition and violate His administrative decrees? Extreme loathing! God is tremendously enraged by people who are unrepentant about aggravating His disposition! "Enraged" is no more than a feeling, a mood; it does not correspond to a clear attitude. However, this feeling—this mood will bring about an outcome for such people: It will fill God with extreme loathing! What is the consequence of this extreme loathing? It is that God will set these people aside and not respond to them for the time being. He will then wait to sort them out "after autumn." What does this imply? Will these people still have outcomes? God never intended to grant such people any outcome! Therefore, is it not perfectly normal that God does not now respond to such people? (Yes, it is normal.) What should such people be preparing to do? They should prepare to bear the negative consequences of their behavior and of the evil actions they have committed. This is God's response to such a person. So, now I say clearly to such people: Do not hold on to your delusions any longer, and do not engage in any more wishful thinking. God will not be tolerant of people indefinitely; He will not endure their trespasses or disobedience forever. Some people will say, "I've seen a few such people, too, and when they pray, they feel especially touched by God, and then they weep bitterly. Usually they're also very happy; they seem to have God's presence and God's guidance with them." Do not utter such nonsense! Bitter tears do not necessarily mean one is being touched by God or enjoys God's presence, let alone God's guidance. If people anger God, will He still guide them? In short, when God has decided to cast out and abandon someone, that person's outcome is already gone. No matter how favorable their feelings when they pray, or how much faith they have in God in their hearts, it is no longer of consequence. The important thing is that God does not need this kind of faith; He has already spurned these people. How to deal with them in the future is also unimportant. The important thing is that in the very instant that these people anger God, their outcomes are set. If God has determined not to save such people, then they will be left behind to be punished. This is God's attitude.

Though God's essence contains an element of love, and He is merciful toward each and every person, people have overlooked and forgotten the fact that His essence is one of dignity as well. That He has love does not mean that people can offend Him freely, without inciting in Him feelings or a reaction, nor does the fact that He has mercy mean that He has no principles in how He treats people. God is alive; He genuinely exists. He is neither an imagined puppet nor any other object. Given that He does exist, we should carefully listen to the voice of His heart at all times, pay close attention to His attitude, and come to understand His feelings. We should not use human imaginings to define God, nor should we impose human thoughts or wishes on Him, making God treat people in a human manner based on human imaginings. If you do this, then you are angering God, tempting His wrath, and challenging His dignity! Thus, once you have come to understand the severity of this matter, I urge each and every one of you to be cautious and prudent in your actions. Be cautious and prudent in your speech, as well with regard to how you treat God, the more cautious and prudent you are, the better! When you do not understand what God's attitude is, refrain from speaking carelessly, do not be careless in your actions, and do not apply labels casually. Even more importantly, do not come to any arbitrary conclusions. Instead, you should wait and seek; these actions, too, are an expression of fearing God and shunning evil. Above all else, if you can achieve this, and above all else, if you possess this attitude, then God will not blame you for your stupidity, ignorance, and lack of understanding of the reasons behind things. Rather, owing to your attitude of fear of offending God, respect for His intentions, and willingness to obey Him, God will remember you, guide and enlighten you, or tolerate your immaturity and ignorance. Conversely, should your attitude toward Him be irreverent—judging Him as you wish or arbitrarily guessing at and defining His ideas—God will condemn you, discipline you, and even punish you; or, He might offer comment on you. Perhaps this comment will involve your outcome. Therefore, I wish to emphasize once more: Each of you should be cautious and prudent about everything that comes from God. Do not speak carelessly, and do not be careless in your actions. Before you say anything, you should stop and think: Would this action of mine anger God? In doing it, am I revering God? Even in simple matters, you should try to figure these questions out, and spend more time considering them. If you can truly practice according to these principles in all aspects, in all things, at all times, and adopt such an attitude especially when you do not understand something, then God will always guide you and provide you with a path to follow. No matter what sort of show people put on, God sees them quite clearly and plainly, and He will offer an accurate and appropriate evaluation of these displays of yours. After you have undergone the final trial, God will take all of your behavior and sum it up completely in order to determine your outcome. This result will convince every single person beyond the shadow of a doubt. What I would like to tell you here is this: Your every deed, your every action, and your every thought decide your fate.

Who Determines People's Outcomes?

There is another matter of the utmost importance to discuss, and that is your attitude toward God. This attitude is extremely important! It determines whether you will ultimately walk toward destruction or into the beautiful destination that God has prepared for you. In the Age of Kingdom, God has already worked for more than twenty years, and perhaps, over the course of these two decades, deep down you have been a bit unsure of how you have performed. However, in God's heart, He has made a real and truthful record of each of you. From the time that each person started following Him and listening to His sermons, gradually understanding more and more of the truth, and until the time each person began to fulfill their duties, God has kept a record of all manner of behaviors attributable to each person. While fulfilling their duties and being faced with all manner of environments and trials, what are people's attitudes? How do they perform? How do they feel toward God in their hearts? ... God has an account of all of this; He has a record of all of it. Perhaps, from your point of view, these issues are confusing. However, from where God stands, they are all clear as crystal, and there is not even the slightest hint of sloppiness. This is an issue that involves the outcome of each person, and touches upon each person's fate and future prospects as well, and more than that, this is where God expends all of His painstaking efforts; therefore, God would never neglect it one bit, nor does He tolerate any carelessness. God is making a record of this account of humankind, making note of the entire course of humans in their following of God, from the beginning right up to the end. Your attitude toward Him during this period has determined your fate. Is this not true? Now, do you believe that God is righteous? Are His actions appropriate? Do you still have any other imaginings about God in your heads? (No.) Then would you say that people's outcomes are for God to determine, or for people to determine themselves? (They are for God to determine.) Who is it that determines them? (God.) You are not sure, are you? Brothers and sisters from Hong Kong, speak up—who determines them? (People themselves determine them.) Do people themselves determine them? Would that not then mean that people's outcomes have nothing to do with God? Brothers and sisters from South Korea, speak up. (God determines people's outcomes based on all of their actions and deeds, and in accordance with what path they are on.) This is a very objective response. There is a fact here of which I must inform you all: Over the course of God's salvation work, He has

set a standard for humans. This standard is that they must listen to the word of God and walk in God's way. It is this standard that is used to weigh people's outcomes. If you practice in accordance with this standard of God, then you can obtain a good outcome; if you do not, then you cannot obtain a good outcome. Who, then, would you say determines this outcome? It is not God alone who determines it, but rather God and humans together. Is this correct? (Yes.) Why is that? It is because it is God who actively wishes to engage in the work of humankind's salvation and prepare a beautiful destination for humanity; humans are the objects of God's work, and this outcome, this destination, is what God prepares for them. If there were no objects for Him to work on, then He would not need to do this work; if He were not doing this work, then humans would not have an opportunity to gain salvation. Humans are the ones to be saved, and although being saved is the passive part of this process, it is the attitude of the ones playing this part that determines whether or not God will be successful in His work to save humankind. If not for the guidance that God gives you, you would not know His standard, nor would you have an objective. If you have this standard, this objective, yet you still do not cooperate, put it into practice, or pay the price, then you will not obtain this outcome. For this reason, I say that one's outcome cannot be separated from God, and it also cannot be separated from the person. Now, then, you know who determines people's outcomes.

People Tend to Define God Based on Experience

When communicating about the topic of knowing God, have you noticed something? Have you noticed that His attitude these days has undergone a transformation? Is His attitude toward humans unchangeable? Will He always endure like this, extending all of His love and mercy to humans indefinitely? This matter also involves the essence of God. Let us return to the question of the so-called prodigal son mentioned earlier. After that question was asked, your answers were not very clear; in other words, you still do not have a very solid understanding of God's intentions. Upon knowing that God loves humankind, they define Him as a symbol of love: They believe that no matter what people do, no matter how they behave, no matter how they treat God, and no matter how disobedient they might be, none of this really matters, for God has love, and His love is unlimited and immeasurable; God has love, so He can be tolerant of people; and God has love, so He can be merciful toward people, merciful toward their immaturity, merciful toward their ignorance, and merciful toward their disobedience. Is this really the way it is? For some people, when they have experienced God's patience once or even a few times, they will treat these experiences as capital in their own understanding of God, believing that He will forever be patient and merciful toward them, and then, over the course of their lives, they take this patience of God and regard it as the standard by which He treats them. There are also those who, after having experienced God's tolerance once, will forever define God as tolerant—and in their minds, this tolerance is

indefinite, unconditional, and even totally unprincipled. Are such beliefs correct? Every time matters of God's essence or God's disposition are discussed, you seem bewildered. Seeing you like this makes Me very anxious. You have heard a lot of truths concerning God's essence; you have also listened to a great many discussions concerning His disposition. However, in your minds, these issues and the truth of these aspects are just memories based on theory and written words; in your day-to-day lives, none of you is ever able to experience or see God's disposition for what it really is. Thus, you are all muddle-headed in your beliefs; you are all believing blindly, to the point that you have an irreverent attitude toward God and even brush Him aside. What does your having this kind of attitude toward God lead to? It leads to your always making conclusions about God. Once you have acquired a little bit of knowledge, you then feel very satisfied, as though you have obtained God in His entirety. Afterward, you conclude that this is how God is, and you do not let Him move freely. Furthermore, whenever God does something new, you simply refuse to admit that He is God. One day, when God says, "I do not love humankind anymore; I will extend no more mercy to humans; I do not have any further tolerance or patience for them; I am filled to the brim with extreme loathing and antipathy toward them," such statements will cause conflict deep in people's hearts. Some of them will even say, "You're not my God anymore; You're no longer the God that I want to follow. If this is what You say, then You're no longer qualified to be my God, and I don't need to keep following You. If You won't give me mercy, love, and tolerance anymore, then I will stop following You. If You are tolerant of me indefinitely, always patient with me, and allow me to see that You are love, that You are patience, and that You are tolerance, only then can I follow You, and only then will I have the confidence to follow You to the end. Since I have Your patience and mercy, my disobedience and my trespasses can be forgiven and pardoned indefinitely, and I can sin anytime and anywhere, confess and be pardoned anytime and anywhere, and anger You anytime and anywhere. You shouldn't have any opinions or draw any conclusions about me." Though not a single one of you may think about this sort of issue so subjectively or consciously, whenever you consider God to be a tool to be used to forgive you of your sins or an object to be used for obtaining a beautiful destination, you have subtly placed the living God in opposition to you, as your enemy. This is what I see. You may keep on saying such things as, "I believe in God," "I pursue the truth," "I want to change my disposition," "I want to break free from the influence of darkness," "I want to satisfy God," "I want to submit to God," "I want to be faithful toward God, and do my duty well," and so forth. However, no matter how sweet-sounding your words might be, no matter how much theory you might know, and no matter how imposing or dignified that theory might be, the fact of the matter is that there are now many of you who have already learned how to use the regulations, the doctrines, the theories you have mastered to draw conclusions about God, thus naturally placing Him in opposition to yourselves. Though you may have mastered letters and doctrines, you have not genuinely entered the reality

of the truth, so it is very difficult for you to get close to God, to know Him, and to understand Him. This is so lamentable!

I saw the following scene in a video: A few sisters had a copy of The Word Appears in the Flesh, and they were holding it up very high; they were raising the book in their midst, high over their heads. Although this was just an image, what it evoked inside Me was not an image; rather, it made Me think that what every person holds high in their heart is not God's word, but the book of God's word. This is a matter that is extremely sad. Such an action is not at all the same as holding God high, because your lack of understanding of God has gotten to the point that even a very obvious question, an extremely minor issue, has you coming up with your own notions. When I ask things of you, and am being serious with you, you respond with conjecture and your own imaginings; some of you even take on a doubtful tone and answer My questions with questions. This tells Me even more clearly that the God you believe in is not the true God. After reading God's words for so many years, you use them, God's work, and more doctrines to draw conclusions about Him once again. Moreover, you never even attempt to understand God; you never try to figure out His intentions, understand His attitude toward humans, or comprehend how God thinks, why He is sad, why He is angry, why He spurns people, and other such questions. Moreover, even more people believe that God has always been silent because He is simply watching humanity's various actions, with no attitude or ideas about them. Yet another group of people believe that God does not utter a sound because He has acquiesced, remaining silent because He is waiting or because He has no attitude; they think that because God's attitude has already been elaborated fully in the book, and expressed in its entirety to humankind, it therefore does not need to be told to people time and time again. Although God is silent, He still has an attitude and a viewpoint, as well as a standard He demands people to live up to. Though people do not try to understand Him or seek Him, God's attitude is very clear. Consider someone who once passionately followed God, but then, at some point, abandoned Him and left. Should this person want to come back now, surprisingly enough, you do not know what God's viewpoint would be, or what His attitude would be. Is this not extremely sad? The fact is this is a fairly superficial matter. If you truly understood God's heart, you would know His attitude toward this kind of person, and you would not give an ambiguous answer. Since you do not know, allow Me to fill you in.

God's Attitude Toward Those Who Run Away During His Work

There are people like this everywhere: After they have been certain about God's way, for various reasons, they depart in silence, without a goodbye, to go off and do whatever their hearts desire. For the time being, we will not get into the reasons these people leave; we will first take a look at what God's attitude is toward this kind of person. It is very clear. From the moment these people walk away, in God's eyes, the span of their faith is over. It is not the individual person who ended it, but God. That this person

left God means that they have already rejected God, that they do not want Him anymore, and that they no longer accept God's salvation. Since people like this do not want God, can He still want them? Moreover, when such people possess this sort of attitude, this view, and have grown determined to leave God, they have already aggravated God's disposition. This is despite the fact that they may not have flown into a rage and cursed God, despite the fact that they may not have engaged in any vile or excessive behavior, and despite the fact that these people are thinking, "If there comes a day when I've had my fill of fun on the outside, or when I still need God for something, I will come back. Or if God calls on me, I will come back," or they say, "When I am hurt on the outside, or when I see that the outside world is too dark and too wicked and I no longer want to go with the flow, I will come back to God." Even though these people have calculated in their minds when exactly they will come back, and even though they have tried to leave the door open for their return, they do not realize that no matter what they believe or how they plan, this is all just wishful thinking. Their biggest mistake is being unclear about how their desire to leave makes God feel. From the very moment they decided to leave God, He completely abandons them; by then, He has already determined the outcome of such a person in His heart. What outcome is that? It is that this person will be one of the mice, and will therefore perish along with them. Thus, people often see this kind of situation: Someone abandons God, but then does not receive a punishment. God operates according to His own principles; some things can be seen, while others are only concluded in God's heart, so people cannot see the results. The part which is visible to humans is not necessarily the true side of things, but that other side—the side you do not see—does indeed contain God's true heartfelt thoughts and conclusions.

People Who Run Away During God's Work Are Those Who Abandon the True Way

Why does God give people who run away during His work such serious punishment? Why is He so angry at them? First of all, we know that God's disposition is majesty and wrath; He is not a sheep to be slaughtered by anyone, much less a puppet to be controlled by people however they want. He is also not a bunch of empty air to be bossed around. If you truly believe that God exists, then you should have a God-fearing heart, and you should know that His essence is not one to be angered. This anger may be caused by a word, or perhaps a thought, or perhaps some kind of vile behavior, or perhaps even by a form of mild behavior, or behavior that is passable in the eyes and ethics of humans; or, perhaps it is provoked by a doctrine or a theory. However, once you have angered God, your opportunity is lost, and your end days have arrived. This is a terrible thing! If you do not understand that God must not be offended, then maybe you are not afraid of Him, and perhaps you are routinely offending Him. If you do not know how to fear God, then you are unable to fear God, and you will not know how to put yourself on the path of walking in God's way—fearing God and shunning evil. Once you

become aware, and are conscious that God must not be offended, you will know what it is to fear God and shun evil.

Walking in the way of fearing God and shunning evil is not necessarily about how much truth you know, how many trials you have experienced, or how much you have been disciplined. Rather, it depends on the sort of attitude you have toward God in your heart, and what essence you express. People's essences and their subjective attitudes—these are very important, very crucial. As for those who have renounced and left God, their contemptible attitudes toward Him and their hearts that despise the truth have already aggravated His disposition, so as far as He is concerned, they will never be forgiven. They have known about God's existence, been informed of the news that He has already arrived, and even experienced God's new work. Their departure was not a case of being deluded or muddle-headed, much less were they forced to leave. Rather, they chose consciously, and with a clear mind, to leave God. Their departure was not a matter of losing their way, nor were they cast off. Therefore, in God's eyes, they are not lambs that strayed from the flock, let alone prodigal sons who lost their way. They departed with impunity—and such a condition, such a situation, aggravates God's disposition, and it is out of this aggravation that He gives them hopeless outcomes. Is this kind of outcome not frightful? Therefore, if people do not know God, they can offend Him. This is no small matter! If people do not take God's attitude seriously, and still believe that He is looking forward to their return because they are some of His lost lambs and He is still waiting for them to have a change of heart, then they are not far off from their days of punishment. God will not merely refuse to accept them—given that this is their second time aggravating His disposition, the matter is all the more terrible! These people's irreverent attitudes have already violated God's administrative decrees. Will He still accept them? In His heart, God's principles regarding this matter are that someone has attained certainty about which is the true way, yet can still consciously and with a clear mind reject God and depart from God, then He will block off the road to such a person's salvation, and for this individual, the gate into the kingdom will henceforth be closed. When this person comes knocking once more, God will not open the door; this person will be shut out forever. Perhaps some of you have read the story of Moses in the Bible. After Moses was anointed by God, the 250 leaders expressed their disobedience to Moses because of his actions and for various other reasons. To whom did they refuse to submit? It was not Moses. They refused to submit to God's arrangements; they refused to submit to God's work on this issue. They said the following: "You take too much on you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them." Are these words and lines very serious, from a human point of view? They are not serious. At least, the literal meaning of these words is not serious. In a legal sense, they do not break any laws, because on its very surface, this is not hostile language or vocabulary, much less does it have any blasphemous connotations. These are just common sentences, nothing more. Why is it, then, that these words can trigger such rage from God? It is because they were not spoken to people, but to God. The attitude and disposition expressed by them is precisely what aggravates God's disposition, and they offend God's disposition that must not be offended. We all know what those leaders' outcomes were in the end. Regarding people who have abandoned God, what is their viewpoint? What is their attitude? And why do their viewpoint and attitude cause God to deal with them in such a manner? The reason is that though they clearly know He is God, they still choose to betray Him, and this is why they are totally stripped of their chances for salvation. As is written in the Bible, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). Do you now have a clear understanding of this matter?

People's Fates Are Decided by Their Attitudes Toward God

God is a living God, and just as people behave differently in different situations, His attitude toward these behaviors differs because He is neither a puppet nor is He a bunch of empty air. Getting to know God's attitude is a worthy pursuit for humankind. People should learn how, by knowing God's attitude, they can little by little attain knowledge of God's disposition and come to understand His heart. When you gradually come to understand God's heart, you will not feel that fearing Him and shunning evil is such a difficult thing to accomplish. Moreover, when you do understand God, you will not be as likely to draw conclusions about Him. Once you have stopped drawing conclusions about God, you will be less likely to offend Him, and without your realizing it, God will lead you to gain knowledge of Him; this will fill your heart with reverence for Him. You will then stop defining God by way of the doctrines, letters, and theories you have mastered. Instead, by constantly seeking out God's intentions in all things, you will unconsciously become a person who is after God's heart.

God's work is unseen and untouchable by humans, but as far as He is concerned, the actions of each and every person—along with their attitude toward Him—are not merely perceptible by God, but visible to Him as well. This is something that everyone should recognize and be very clear about. You might always be asking yourself, "Does God know what I'm doing here? Does He know what I'm thinking about right now? Maybe He does, and maybe He doesn't." If you adopt this sort of viewpoint, following and believing in God yet doubting His work and His existence, then sooner or later there will come a day when you will arouse His anger, for you are already teetering on the edge of a dangerous precipice. I have seen people who have believed in God for many years, yet who still have not gained the reality of the truth, much less understood God's will. These people make no progress in their lives and statures, adhering only to the shallowest of doctrines. This is because such people have never taken God's word to be life itself, and they have never faced up to and accepted His existence. Do you think that upon seeing such people, God is filled with enjoyment? Do they comfort Him? Thus,

it is how people believe in God that decides their fate. Concerning how people seek and how people approach God, people's attitudes are of primary importance. Do not neglect God like He is just a bunch of empty air floating around in the back of your head; always think of the God you believe in as a living God, a real God. He is not sitting around up there in the third heaven with nothing to do. Rather, He is constantly looking into everyone's heart, observing what you are up to, watching your every little word and every little deed, watching how you behave and seeing what your attitude toward Him is. Whether you are willing to give yourself to God or not, all of your behavior and your innermost thoughts and ideas are laid bare before Him and being looked upon by Him. Due to your behavior, due to your deeds, and due to your attitude toward Him, God's opinion of you and His attitude toward you are constantly changing. I would like to offer some advice to some people: Do not place yourselves like infants in the hands of God, as if He should dote on you, as if He could never leave you, and as if His attitude toward you were fixed and could never change, and I advise you to guit dreaming! God is righteous in His treatment of each and every person, and He is earnest in His approach to the work of conquering and saving people. This is His management. He treats every single person seriously, and not like a pet to play with. God's love for humans is not the pampering or spoiling kind, nor are His mercy and tolerance toward humankind indulgent or unmindful. On the contrary, God's love for humans involves cherishing, pitying, and respecting life; His mercy and tolerance convey His expectations of them, and are what humanity needs to survive. God is alive, and God actually exists; His attitude toward humankind is principled, not at all a pack of dogmatic rules, and it can change. His intentions for humanity are gradually changing and transforming with time, depending on circumstances as they arise, and along with the attitude of each and every person. Therefore, you should know in your heart with absolute clarity that the essence of God is immutable, and that His disposition will issue forth at different times and in different contexts. You might not think that this is a serious matter, and you might use your own personal notions to imagine how God should do things. However, there are times when the polar opposite of your viewpoint is true, and by using your own personal notions to attempt to gauge God, you have already angered Him. This is because God does not operate the way you think He does, nor will He treat this matter like you say He will. Thus, I remind you to be careful and prudent in your approach to everything around you, and learn how to follow the principle of walking in God's way in all things, which is to fear God and shun evil. You must develop a firm understanding with regard to the matters of God's will and God's attitude, you must find enlightened people to communicate these matters to you, and you must seek in earnest. Do not view the God of your belief as a puppet—judging Him at will, arriving at arbitrary conclusions about Him, and not treating Him with the respect He deserves. While God is bringing you salvation and determining your outcome. He may grant you mercy, or tolerance, or judgment and chastisement, but in any case, His attitude toward you is not fixed. It is dependent on your own attitude

toward Him, as well as your understanding of Him. Do not allow one passing aspect of your knowledge or understanding of God to define Him in perpetuity. Do not believe in a dead God; believe in the living One. Remember this! Though I have discussed some truths here—truths you needed to hear—in light of your present state and present stature, I will not make any greater demands of you for now, so as not to sap your enthusiasm. Doing so could fill your hearts with too much bleakness and make you feel too much disappointment toward God. Instead, I hope you can use the love for God you have in your hearts and employ a respectful attitude toward God when walking the path that lies ahead. Do not muddle through this matter of how to believe in God; treat it as one of the biggest issues there is. Place it in your heart, put it into practice, and connect it with real life; do not just pay it lip service—for this is a matter of life and death, and one that will determine your destiny. Do not treat it like a joke or child's play! After sharing these words with you today, I wonder how much understanding your minds have harvested. Are there any questions you wish to ask about what I have said here today?

Although these topics are a bit new, and a bit removed from your views, from your usual pursuits, and what you tend to pay attention to, I think that once they have been fellowshiped by you for a period of time, you will develop a common understanding of everything I have said here. These topics are all very new, and ones that you have never considered before, so I hope that they will not add to your burden in any way. I am not speaking these words today to frighten you, nor am I using them as a way to deal with you; rather, My aim is to help you to understand actual facts about the truth. Because a gulf exists between humankind and God, though people believe in God, they have never understood Him or known His attitude. Humans have also never been very enthusiastic in their concern for God's attitude. Rather, they have believed and proceeded blindly, and been careless in their knowledge and understanding of God. I therefore feel compelled to clear these issues up for you, and help you to understand just what kind of God this God you believe in is, as well as what He is thinking, what His attitude is in His treatment of various sorts of people, how far you are from fulfilling His requirements, and how great the disparity is between your actions and the standard He demands. The goal in informing you of these things is to give you a yardstick by which to measure yourselves, and so that you will know what kind of harvest the road you are on has led to, what you have not obtained along this road, and in what areas you simply have not gotten involved. While communicating amongst yourselves, you usually speak on a few commonly-discussed topics that are very narrow in scope and shallow in content. There is a distance, a gap, between that which you discuss and God's intentions, as well as between your discussions and the scope and standard of God's demands. Proceeding like this over time will result in your deviating ever farther from God's way. You are just taking God's current utterances and turning them into objects of worship, and seeing them as rituals and regulations. That is all you are doing! In actual fact, God simply has no place in your hearts, and He has never really obtained your hearts. Some people

think that to know God is very difficult, and this is the truth. It is difficult. If people are made to do their duties and get things done outwardly, and work hard, then they will think that believing in God is very easy, because all those things fall within the scope of human capability. However, the moment the topic shifts over to God's intentions and His attitude toward humanity, then from everyone's point of view, things really do get a bit more difficult. That is because this involves people's understanding of the truth and their entry into reality, so of course there will be a degree of difficulty! Nevertheless, once you get through the first door and begin to attain entry, things gradually get easier.

The Starting Point for Fearing God Is to Treat Him Like God

A little while ago, someone raised a question: How is it that even though we know more of God than Job did, we still cannot revere Him? We touched upon this matter a little bit previously. We actually have discussed the essence of this question before, too, which is the fact that although Job did not know God back then, he still treated Him like God and regarded Him as the Master of the heavens and earth and all things. Job did not consider God to be an enemy; rather, he worshiped Him as the Creator of all things. Why is it that people nowadays resist God so much? Why are they unable to revere Him? One reason is that they have been deeply corrupted by Satan, and with such a deeply-ingrained satanic nature, they have become enemies of God. Thus, even though they believe in God and acknowledge God, they are still able to resist Him and place themselves in opposition to Him. This is determined by human nature. The other reason is that despite their belief in God, people simply do not treat Him as God. Instead, they consider Him to be opposed to humanity, regarding Him as their enemy, and feel that they are irreconcilable with God. It is just that simple. Was this matter not broached in our previous session? Think about it: Is that not the reason? You might possess a bit of knowledge of God, but just what does this knowledge entail? Is this not what everyone is talking about? Is it not what God told you? You are only familiar with the theoretical and doctrinal aspects of it—but have you ever appreciated the true face of God? Do you have subjective knowledge? Do you have practical knowledge and experience? If God had not told you, could you know? Your theoretical knowledge does not represent real knowledge. In short, no matter how much you know or how you came to know it, until you attain a real understanding of God, He will be your enemy, and until you actually begin to treat God as God, He will oppose you, for you are an embodiment of Satan.

When you are together with Christ, perhaps you can serve Him three meals a day, or perhaps serve Him tea and attend to His life's needs; you will seem to have treated Christ as God. Whenever something happens, people's viewpoints always run contrary to God's; people always fail to understand and accept God's point of view. Though people might get along with God on the surface, this does not mean that they are compatible with Him. As soon as something happens, the truth of humanity's disobedience emerges, thus confirming the hostility that exists between humans and

God. This hostility is not one of God's opposing humans or of God's wanting to be hostile to them, nor is it that He places them in opposition to Himself and then treats them as such. Rather, it is a case of this contrary essence toward God that lurks in humans' subjective will and in their subconscious minds. Since people regard all that which comes from God as objects for their research, their response toward what comes from God and toward everything involving God is, above all, to guess, to doubt, and then to quickly adopt an attitude that conflicts with and opposes God. Soon thereafter, they carry a negative mood into disputes or contests with God, going so far as to doubt even whether such a God is worth following. Despite the fact that their rationality tells them that they should not proceed in this manner, they will still choose to do so in spite of themselves, such that they will continue without hesitation to the very end. For example, what is the first reaction some people have when they hear rumors or slanderous talk about God? Their first reaction is to wonder whether these rumors are true or not and whether these rumors exist or not, and then to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. Then they start to think, "There's no way to verify this. Did that really happen? Is this rumor true or not?" Though people like this do not show it on the surface, in their hearts they have already begun to doubt, and already started to deny God. What is the essence of this kind of attitude and of such a viewpoint? Is it not betrayal? Until they are faced with this matter, you cannot see what these people's viewpoints are; it seems like they are not in conflict with God, and as though they do not regard Him as an enemy. However, as soon as they are faced with a problem, they immediately stand with Satan and oppose God. What does this suggest? It suggests that humans and God are opposed! It is not that God regards humanity as the enemy, but that the very essence of humanity itself is hostile toward God. No matter how long someone has followed Him or how big a price they have paid, and regardless of how they praise God, how they might keep themselves from resisting Him, and even how strenuously they urge themselves to love God, they can never manage to treat God as God. Is this not determined by people's essence? If you treat Him as God and genuinely believe that He is God, can you still have any doubts toward Him? Can your heart still harbor any question marks about Him? There cannot anymore, right? The trends of this world are so evil, and this human race is, too; so, how could you not have any notions on them? You yourself are so wicked, so how is it that you do not have a notion about that? And yet, just a few rumors and some slander can give rise to such enormous notions about God, and lead to your imagining so many things, which shows just how immature your stature is! Just the "buzzing" of a few mosquitos and a few repulsive flies—is that all it takes to deceive you? What kind of person is this? Do you know what God thinks about such people? God's attitude is actually very clear regarding how He treats them. It is only that God's treatment of these people is to give them the cold shoulder—His attitude is to not pay them any attention, and to not take these ignorant people seriously. Why is that? It is because in God's heart, He never planned on obtaining those people who have pledged to be hostile toward Him to the

very end and who have never planned on seeking out a way of being compatible with Him. Perhaps these words I have spoken might hurt a few people. Well, are you willing to always let Me hurt you like this? Whether you are or not, everything I say is the truth! If I always hurt you and expose your scars like this, will it affect the lofty image of God you harbor in your hearts? (It won't.) I agree that it will not, for there simply is no God in your hearts. The lofty God that inhabits your hearts—the one you strongly defend and protect—is simply not God. Rather, he is a figment of human imagination; he simply does not exist. Therefore, it is all the better that I expose the answer to this riddle; does this not lay the entire truth bare? The real God is not what humans imagine Him to be. I hope you can all face this reality, and it will help in your knowledge of God.

Those People Who Are Not Acknowledged by God

There are some people whose faith has never been acknowledged within God's heart. In other words, God does not recognize that they are His followers, because He does not praise their beliefs. For these people, regardless of how many years they have followed God, their ideas and views have never changed; they are like the unbelievers, adhering to the unbelievers' principles and ways of doing things and to the unbelievers' laws of survival and faith. They have never accepted the word of God as their life, never believed that God's word is truth, never intended on accepting God's salvation, and never recognized God as their God. They see believing in God as some kind of amateur hobby, treating Him as mere spiritual sustenance; as such, they do not think it is worth it to try and understand God's disposition or essence. It can be said that all that corresponds to the true God has nothing to do with these people; they are not interested, nor can they be bothered to pay heed. This is because deep in their hearts, there is an intense voice that is always telling them, "God is invisible and untouchable, and does not exist." They believe that trying to understand this sort of God would not be worth their efforts, and that in doing so they would be fooling themselves. They believe that by merely acknowledging God with words without taking any real stand or investing themselves in any real actions, they are being pretty clever. How does God look upon such people? He views them as unbelievers. Some people ask, "Can unbelievers read God's words? Can they fulfill their duties? Can they say the words, 'I'll live for God'?" What humans often see are the displays people exhibit on the surface; they do not see people's essences. However, God does not look at these superficial displays; He only sees their inner essences. Thus, this is the kind of attitude and definition God has toward these people. These people say, "Why does God do this? Why does God do that? I can't understand this; I can't understand that; this doesn't conform to human notions; You must explain that to me...." In answer to this, I ask: Is it really necessary to explain these matters to you? Do these matters actually have anything to do with you? Who do you think you are? Where did you come from? Are you really qualified to give God pointers? Do you believe in Him? Does He acknowledge your faith? Since your faith has nothing

to do with God, what business of yours are His doings? You do not know where you stand in God's heart, so how can you be qualified to engage in dialogue with Him?

Words of Admonishment

Are you not uncomfortable after hearing these remarks? Though you may be either unwilling to listen to them or unwilling to accept them, they are all facts. Because this stage of the work is for God to perform, if you are not concerned with His intentions, have no care about His attitude, and do not understand His essence and disposition, then in the end, you will be the one who will lose out. Do not blame My words for being difficult to hear, and do not blame them for dampening your enthusiasm. I speak the truth; it is not My intention to discourage you. No matter what I ask of you, and no matter how you are required to do it, I hope that you walk the correct path and follow God's way, and that you never deviate from the correct path. If you do not proceed in accordance with God's word or follow His way, then there can be no doubt that you are rebelling against God and have strayed from the correct path. Thus, I feel there are some matters that I must clarify for you, and that I must make you believe unequivocally, clearly, and without a shred of uncertainty, and help you to have a clear understanding of God's attitude, His intentions, how He perfects humans, and in what manner He determines people's outcomes. Should there come a day when you are unable to embark upon this path, then I bear no responsibility, for these words have already been spoken to you very clearly. As for how you deal with your own outcome, this is a matter that is entirely up to you. Regarding the outcomes of various types of people, God has different attitudes, He has His own ways of weighing them, as well as His own standard of requirement for them. His standard of weighing people's outcomes is one that is fair to everyone—there is no doubt about that! Therefore, the fears of some are unnecessary. Are you relieved now? That is all for today. Goodbye!

October 17, 2013

God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I

Today we are fellowshiping about an important topic. This is a topic that has been discussed ever since the commencement of God's work and which is of very great significance to every single person. In other words, this is an issue that everyone will encounter in the course of believing in God; it is an issue that must be encountered. It is a crucial, unavoidable issue that mankind cannot walk away from. Speaking of importance, what is the most important thing for every believer in God? Some people think that the most important thing is understanding God's will; some believe it is most important to eat and drink more of God's words; some feel the most important thing is to know themselves; others are of the opinion that the most important thing is knowing how to find salvation through God, how to follow God, and how to satisfy God's will. We will put all of these issues aside for today. So what are we discussing then? The topic is God. Is this the most important topic to every person? What does this topic entail? Of course, it certainly cannot be separated from God's disposition, God's essence, and God's work. So today, let us discuss "God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself."

From the time man started believing in God, they have encountered topics such as God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself. When it comes to God's work, some people will say: "God's work is done on us; we experience it every day, so we are not unfamiliar with it." When speaking of God's disposition, some will say: "God's disposition is a topic we study, explore, and focus on our entire lives, so we should be familiar with it." As for God Himself, some will say: "God Himself is whom we follow, whom we have faith in, and the One we pursue; nor are we uninformed about Him." God has never stopped His work since creation; throughout His work He has continued to express His disposition and used various means to express His word. At the same time, He has never stopped expressing Himself and His essence to mankind, expressing His will toward man and what He requires from man. Hence, in literal terms, no one is a stranger to these topics. To people who follow God today, however, God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself are actually all very alien. Why is this the case? As man experiences God's work, they also come into contact with God, making them feel as though they understand God's disposition, or have some knowledge of what it is like. Accordingly, man does not think he is a stranger to God's work or God's disposition. Rather, man thinks he is very familiar with God and understands much about God. But as it stands now, this understanding of God is, among many, restricted to what they have read in books, limited to personal experience, restrained by imagination, and above all, confined to facts they can see with their own eyes—all of which is far removed from the true God Himself. And just how far is this "far"? Perhaps man is not sure himself, or perhaps man has a slight sense, an inkling—but when it comes to God Himself, man's understanding

of Him is much too far removed from the essence of the true God Himself. This is why, for a topic like "God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself," it is imperative for us to engage in fellowship in a systematic and concrete way.

In fact, God's disposition is open to everyone and is not hidden, because God has never consciously avoided any person and has never consciously sought to conceal Himself to prevent people from knowing Him or understanding Him. God's disposition has always been to be open and to face each person candidly. In God's management, God does His work, facing everyone, and His work is done on every single person. As He does this work, He is continuously revealing His disposition and continuously using His essence, what He has and what He is, to guide and to provide for every single person. In every age and at every stage, regardless of whether the circumstances are good or bad, God's disposition is always open to each individual, and His possessions and being are always open to each individual, just as His life is constantly and unceasingly providing for and supporting mankind. Despite all of this, God's disposition remains hidden to some. Why? Because even though these people live within God's work and follow God, they have never sought to understand God nor wanted to get to know God, let alone get closer to God. To these people, understanding God's disposition portends that their end is nigh; it means they are about to be judged and condemned by God's disposition. Therefore, they have never desired to understand God or His disposition, nor ever coveted a deeper understanding or knowledge of God's will. They do not seek to comprehend God's will through conscious cooperation—they just forever enjoy and never tire of doing the things they want to do; believe in the God they want to believe in; believe in the God that exists only in their imaginations, the God that exists only in their notions; and believe in a God that is inseparable from them in their daily lives. When it comes to the true God Himself, they are completely dismissive and have no desire to understand Him or to pay heed to Him, and still less wish to grow closer to Him. They are only using the words God expresses to adorn themselves, to package themselves. To them, this already makes them successful believers and people with faith in God inside their hearts. In their hearts, they are guided by their imaginations, their notions, and even their personal definitions of God. The true God Himself, on the other hand, has absolutely nothing to do with them. Because, were they to understand the true God Himself, understand God's true disposition, and understand what God has and is, it would mean that their actions, their faith, and their pursuits would be condemned. That is why they are loath to understand God's essence and are loath and unwilling to actively seek or pray to better understand God, better know God's will, and better understand God's disposition. They would rather God be something made up, something hollow and vague. They would rather God be someone who is exactly as they have imagined Him, someone who can be at their beck and call, inexhaustible in supply and always available. When they want to enjoy God's grace, they ask God to be that grace. When they need God's blessing, they ask God to be that blessing. When faced

with adversity, they ask God to embolden them, to be their rear shield. These people's knowledge of God is stuck within the ambit of grace and blessing. Their understanding of God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself is also merely restricted to their imaginings and letters and doctrines. But there are some people who are eager to understand God's disposition, want to genuinely see God Himself, and truly understand God's disposition and what He has and is. These people are in pursuit of the reality of truth and of salvation by God, and seek to receive conquest, salvation, and perfection by God. They use their hearts to read God's word, use their hearts to appreciate every situation and every person, event, and thing God has arranged for them, and they pray and seek with sincerity. What they want to know most is God's will, and to understand most is God's true disposition and essence, that they may no longer offend God and, through their experiences, may see more of God's loveliness and His true side. It is also so that a genuinely real God will exist inside their hearts, and so that God will have a place in their hearts, such that they will no longer be living amidst imaginings, notions, or vagueness. For these people, the reason they have a pressing desire to understand God's disposition and His essence is because God's disposition and essence are needed by mankind from moment to moment in the course of their experience; it is His disposition and essence that supply life throughout one's lifetime. Once they understand God's disposition, they will be able to better revere God, better cooperate with God's work, and be more considerate toward God's will and do their duty to the best of their abilities. Such are the attitudes toward God's disposition held by two types of people. The first type does not want to understand God's disposition. Even though they say they want to understand God's disposition, get to know God Himself, see what God has and is, and genuinely appreciate God's will, deep down they would rather that God not exist. It is because this type of people consistently disobeys and resists God; they fight God for position in their own hearts and often doubt or even deny God's existence. They do not want to let God's disposition or the real God Himself occupy their hearts. They only want to satisfy their own desires, imaginings, and ambitions. So, these people may believe in God, follow God, and may also give up their families and jobs for Him, but they do not desist from their evil ways. Some even steal or squander offerings, or curse God in private, while others might use their positions to repeatedly testify about themselves, aggrandize themselves, and compete with God for people and status. They use various methods and measures to make people worship them, constantly trying to win people over and control them. Some even intentionally mislead people into thinking that they are God so that they can be treated like God. They would never tell someone that they have been corrupted—that they too are corrupt and arrogant, not to worship them, and that no matter how well they do, it is all due to God's exaltation and that they are doing what they ought to, anyway. Why do they not say these things? Because they are deeply afraid of losing their place in people's hearts. This is why such people never exalt God and never bear witness to God, as they have never tried to understand God. Can they know God without understanding Him? Impossible! Thus, while the words in the topic "God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself" may be simple, they have different meanings to each person. For someone who often disobeys God, resists God, and is hostile toward God, the words portend condemnation; whereas someone who pursues the reality of the truth and often comes before God to seek God's will will take to such words as a fish to water. So there are those among you who, when they hear talk of God's disposition and God's work, start to get a headache, their hearts grow full of resistance, and they become extremely uncomfortable. But there are others among you who feel that the topic is exactly what they need, because it is so beneficial to them. It is something that cannot be missing from their life experience; it is the crux of the crux, the foundation of faith in God, and something mankind cannot abandon. For all of you, this topic might seem both near and far, unknown yet familiar. But no matter what, this is a topic that everyone must listen to, must know, and must understand. No matter how you deal with it, no matter how you look upon it, or how you understand it, the importance of this topic cannot be ignored.

God has been doing His work ever since He created mankind. At the start, it was a very simple work, but despite its simplicity, it contained expressions of God's essence and disposition. While God's work has now been elevated, and this work on every person who follows Him has become prodigious and concrete, with great expression of His word, God's person throughout has been hidden from mankind. Although He has been incarnated twice, from the time of the biblical accounts to modern days, who has ever seen God's real person? Based on your understanding, has anyone ever seen God's real person? No. No one has seen God's real person, meaning no one has ever seen God's true self. This is something that everyone agrees on. That is to say, God's real person, or God's Spirit, is concealed from all of humanity, including Adam and Eve, whom He created, and including the righteous Job, whom He accepted. None of them saw God's real person. But why does God knowingly mask His real person? Some people say: "God is afraid of scaring people." Others say: "God hides His real person because man is too small and God is too great; humans may not see Him, or else they will die." There are also those who say: "God is busy managing His work every day, and He might not have time to appear so that others may see Him." No matter what you believe, I have a conclusion here. What is that conclusion? It is that God simply does not want people to see His real person. Staying hidden from humanity is something God does deliberately. In other words, it is God's intent for people to not see His real person. This should be clear to all by now. If God has never revealed His person to anyone, then do you think God's person exists? (He exists.) Of course He does. The existence of God's person is beyond all doubt. But as for how great God's person is or what He looks like, are these questions mankind should investigate? No. The answer is negative. If God's person is not a topic we should be exploring, then what is? (God's disposition.) (God's work.) Before we begin fellowshiping about the official topic, however, let us

return to what we were discussing a moment ago: Why has God never revealed His person to mankind? Why does God intentionally hide His person from mankind? There is only one reason, and that is: Although man, whom God created, has experienced thousands of years of His work, there is not a single person who knows God's work, God's disposition, and God's essence. Such people, in God's eyes, are in opposition to Him, and God would not show Himself to people who are hostile toward Him. This is the sole reason God has never revealed His person to mankind and why He deliberately shields His person from humanity. Is the importance of knowing God's disposition now clear to you?

Since the existence of God's management, He has always been fully dedicated to carrying out His work. Despite veiling His person from man, He has always been by man's side, doing work on man, expressing His disposition, guiding all of humanity with His essence, and doing His work on every single person through His might, His wisdom, and His authority, thus bringing into being the Age of Law, the Age of Grace, and today's Age of Kingdom. Though God conceals His person from man, His disposition, His being and possessions, and His will toward mankind are unreservedly revealed to man for man to see and experience. In other words, though human beings cannot see or touch God, the disposition and essence of God encountered by humanity are absolutely expressions of God Himself. Is that not the truth? Regardless of the way or angle of approach God chooses for His work, He always treats people through His true identity, does the work incumbent upon Him, and says the words He is bound to say. No matter what position God speaks from—He could be standing in the third heaven, or standing in the flesh, or even as an ordinary person—He always speaks to man with all His heart and all His mind, without any deception or concealment. When He carries out His work, God expresses His word and His disposition, and expresses what He has and is, without any reservation whatsoever. He guides mankind with His life and His being and possessions. This is how man lived through the Age of Law—the cradle era of humanity—under the guidance of the "unseeable and untouchable" God.

God became flesh for the first time after the Age of Law—an incarnation that lasted thirty-three and a half years. For a human being, is thirty-three and a half years a long time? (It is not long.) Since the lifespan of a human being is usually much longer than thirty-something years, this is not a very long time for a man. But for God incarnate, these thirty-three and a half years were long indeed. He became a person—an ordinary person who took on God's work and commission. This meant that He had to assume work an ordinary person cannot handle, while also enduring suffering that ordinary people cannot withstand. The amount of suffering endured by the Lord Jesus during the Age of Grace, from the start of His work to when He was nailed to the cross, may not be something that people of today could have witnessed in person, but can you not at least get an idea of it through the stories in the Bible? Irrespective of how many details there are in these recorded facts, all in all, God's work during this period was full of hardship

and suffering. For a corrupted human, thirty-three and a half years is not a long time; a little suffering is a small matter. But for the holy, unblemished God, who had to bear all of mankind's sins, and eat, sleep, and live with sinners, this pain was unbelievably great. He is the Creator, the Sovereign of all things and the Ruler of everything, yet when He came into the world, He had to endure the oppression and cruelty of corrupted humans. In order to complete His work and rescue humanity from the sea of misery, He had to be condemned by man and bear the sins of all mankind. The extent of the suffering He went through cannot possibly be fathomed nor appreciated by ordinary people. What does this suffering represent? It represents God's devotion to humankind. It stands for the humiliation He suffered and the price He paid for man's salvation, to redeem their sins, and to complete this stage of His work. It also means that man would be redeemed from the cross by God. This is a price paid in blood, in life, and a price no created being could afford. It is because He has God's essence and possesses what God has and is that He could bear this kind of suffering and do this type of work. This is something no being created by Him could have done in His stead. This is the work of God during the Age of Grace and a revelation of His disposition. Does this reveal anything about what God has and is? Is it worth mankind getting to know? In that age, though man did not see God's person, they received God's sin offering and were redeemed from the cross by God. Mankind may not be unfamiliar with the work God did during the Age of Grace, but is anyone familiar with the disposition and will expressed by God during this period? Man merely knows about details of God's work during different ages and through various channels, or knows of stories related to God that took place at the same time God was carrying out His work. These details and stories are at most just some information or legends about God and have nothing to do with God's disposition and essence. So no matter how many stories people know about God, it does not mean that they have a deep understanding and knowledge of God's disposition or His essence. As in the Age of Law, though people in the Age of Grace had experienced an immediate and intimate encounter with God in the flesh, their knowledge of God's disposition and God's essence was virtually non-existent.

In the Age of Kingdom, God became flesh once more, in the same way He did the first time. During this period of work, God still unreservedly expresses His word, does the work He is bound to do, and expresses what He has and is. At the same time, He continues to endure and tolerate man's disobedience and ignorance. Does God not continuously reveal His disposition and express His will during this period of work, too? Therefore, from the creation of man until now, God's disposition, His being and possessions, and His will have always been open to every person. God has never deliberately hidden His essence, His disposition, or His will. It is just that mankind does not care about what God is doing, what His will is—that is why man has such a pitiful understanding of God. In other words, while God conceals His person, He is also standing by mankind at every moment, openly projecting His will, disposition, and

essence at all times. In a sense, God's person is also open to people, but due to man's blindness and disobedience, they are never able to see God's appearance. So if that is the case, then should understanding God's disposition and God Himself not be easy for everyone? That is a very difficult question to answer, isn't it? You can say it is easy, but while some people seek to know God, they cannot really get to know Him or get a clear understanding of Him—it is always hazy and vague. But if you say it is not easy, that is not correct either. Having been the subject of God's work for so long, everyone should, through their experiences, have had genuine dealings with God. They should at least have sensed God to some extent in their hearts or have had a spiritual brushing with God, and they should at least have had some perceptive awareness of God's disposition or gained some understanding of Him. From the time man began to follow God until now, mankind has received far too much, but due to all sorts of reasons—man's poor caliber, ignorance, rebelliousness, and various intentions—mankind has also lost too much of it. Has God not already given mankind enough? Though God hides His person from humanity, He supplies humans with what He has and is, and His life; humanity's knowledge of God should not only be what it is now. That is why I think it is necessary to further fellowship with you about the topic of God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself. The purpose is so that the thousands of years of care and consideration God has vested in man do not end in vain, and so that mankind can genuinely understand and appreciate God's will toward them. It is so people can advance to a new stage in their knowledge of God. It will also return God to His true place in people's hearts; that is, do Him justice.

To understand God's disposition and God Himself, you have to start small. But start small from where? To begin, I have selected some chapters from the Bible. The information below contains Bible verses, all of which are related to the topic of God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself. I specifically found these excerpts as reference materials to help you know God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself. By sharing them, we will be able to see what kind of disposition God has revealed through His past work and which aspects of His essence are unknown to man. These chapters may be old, but the topic we are fellowshiping about is something new that people do not have and have never heard of. Some of you might find it inconceivable is bringing up Adam and Eve and going back to Noah not retracing the same steps again? No matter what you think, these chapters are very beneficial to fellowship about this topic and can act as the teaching texts or first-hand materials for today's fellowship. By the time I finish this fellowship, you will understand My intentions behind choosing these chapters. Those who have read the Bible before may have read these few verses, but might not truly understand them. First, let us briefly review them, then go through each one in detail in our fellowshiping.

Adam and Eve are mankind's ancestors. If we are to mention characters from the Bible, then we must start with the two of them. Next is Noah, mankind's second ancestor.

Who is the third character? (Abraham.) Do you all know Abraham's story? Some of you may know it, but for others it may not be very clear. Who is the fourth character? Who is mentioned in the story of the destruction of Sodom? (Lot.) But Lot is not referenced here. Who does it refer to? (Abraham.) The main thing mentioned in the story of Abraham is what Jehovah God had said. Do you see it? Who is the fifth character? (Job.) Does God not mention a lot of Job's story during this current stage of His work? Then do you care very much about this story? If you do care very much, have you read Job's story in the Bible carefully? Do you know what things Job said, and what things he did? To those of you who have read it the most, how many times have you read it? Do you read it often? Sisters from Hong Kong, please tell us. (I read it a couple of times before when we were in the Age of Grace.) You have not read it again since? That is lamentable. Let Me tell you: During this stage of God's work He mentioned Job many times, which is a reflection of His intentions. That He mentioned Job many times but did not arouse your attention is a testament to a fact: You have no interest in being people who are good and people who fear God and shun evil. This is because you are satisfied with just having a rough idea about the story of Job cited by God. You are content with merely understanding the story itself, but you do not care about and do not try to understand the details of who Job is and the purpose behind why God refers to Job on so many occasions. If such a person praised by God does not interest you, then what exactly are you paying attention to? If you do not care about or try to understand such an important person God has mentioned, what might that say about your attitude toward God's word? Would that not be deplorable? Would it not prove that most of you do not engage in practical things or pursue the truth? If you do pursue the truth, you will pay the requisite attention to the people whom God approves of and the characters' stories God has spoken of. Regardless of whether you can live up to them or find their stories palpable, you will quickly go and read about them, try to comprehend them, find ways to follow their example, and do what you can to the best of your ability. This is how someone longing for the truth ought to act. But the fact is, most of you sitting here have never read the story of Job—and that is quite telling.

Let us return to the topic I was just discussing. In this part of Scripture, which concerns the Old Testament Age of Law, I have opted to focus on certain stories about highly representative characters most people who have read the Bible will be familiar with. Anyone who reads the stories about these characters will be able to feel that the work God has done on them and the words God has spoken to them are equally tangible and accessible to people today. When you read these stories, the records from the Bible, you will be able to better understand how God went about His work and treated people during those times in history. But the reason I have decided to discuss these chapters today is not so you try to focus on the stories themselves or the characters in them. Rather, it is so you can—through these characters' stories—come to see God's deeds and His disposition. This will enable you to more easily get to know and understand God,

see the real side of Him; it will dispel your speculations and notions about Him, and help steer you away from faith beset by vagueness. Unless you have a solid foundation, trying to make sense of God's disposition and getting to know God Himself can often lead to a sense of helplessness, powerlessness, and uncertainty of where to even begin. This is what spurred Me to develop a method and approach which could help you better understand God, more authentically appreciate God's will, get to know God's disposition and God Himself, and let you genuinely feel God's existence and appreciate His will toward mankind. Will this not be to all of your benefit? Now when you revisit these stories and parts of Scripture, what do you feel inside your hearts? Do you think the parts of Scripture I picked out are superfluous? I must reemphasize what I just told you: The aim of having you read these characters' stories is to help you see how God does His work on people and better understand His attitude toward mankind. What will help you reach this understanding? Understanding the work that God has done in the past, and relating it to the work God is doing right now—this will help you understand His myriad aspects. These myriad aspects are real and must be known and understood by all who wish to get to know God.

Let us start with the story of Adam and Eve, beginning with a quote from Scripture.

A. Adam and Eve

1. God's Command to Adam

Gen 2:15–17 And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

What do you gather from these verses? How does this part of Scripture make you feel? Why have I decided to talk about God's Command to Adam? Does each of you now have an image of God and Adam in your mind? You can try to imagine: If you were the one in that scene, deep down, what do you think God would be like? How does thinking about this make you feel? This is a moving and heartwarming picture. Though there is only God and man in it, the intimacy between them fills you with a sense of admiration: God's overflowing love is freely bestowed upon man and surrounds man; man is innocent and pure, unencumbered and carefree, blissfully living under God's eye; God shows concern for man, while man lives under God's protection and blessing; every single thing man does and says is inextricably linked to and inseparable from God.

This can be called God's first command to man after creating him. What does this command convey? It conveys God's will, but also His worries for mankind. This is God's first command, and it is also the first time God expresses worry for man. That is to say, God has felt a responsibility toward man since the moment He created him. What is His responsibility? He has to protect man, to look after man. He hopes man can trust and

obey His words. This is also God's first expectation of man. It is with this expectation that God says the following: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." These simple words represent God's will. They also reveal that, in His heart, God has begun to show concern for man. Among all things, only Adam was made in God's image; Adam was the only living thing with God's breath of life; he could walk with God, converse with God. That is why God gave him this command. God made it very plain in His command what man can and cannot do.

In these few simple words, we see God's heart. But what kind of heart shows itself? Is there love in God's heart? Is there concern? In these verses, God's love and concern can not only be appreciated, but also intimately felt. Would you not agree? After hearing Me say this, do you still think these are just a few simple words? They are not so simple after all, are they? Were you aware of this before? If God personally told you these few words, how would you feel inside? If you were not a humane person, if your heart were ice cold, then you would not feel a thing, you would not appreciate God's love, and you would not try to understand God's heart. But as a person with a conscience and sense of humanity, you would feel differently. You would feel warmth, you would feel cared for and loved, and you would feel happiness. Is that not right? When you feel these things, how will you act toward God? Would you feel attached to God? Would you love and respect God from the bottom of your heart? Would your heart grow closer to God? You can see from this just how important God's love is to man. But what is even more crucial is man's appreciation for and comprehension of God's love. In fact, does God not say a lot of similar things during this stage of His work? Are there people today who appreciate God's heart? Can you appreciate the will of God I just spoke of? You cannot really appreciate God's will when it is this concrete, tangible, and real. That is why I say you do not have real knowledge and understanding of God. Is this not true? But let us leave it at that for now.

2. God Creates Eve

Gen 2:18–20 And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Gen 2:22–23 And the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

There is one key line in this part of Scripture: "whatever Adam called every living

creature, that was the name thereof." So, who gave all living creatures their names? It was Adam, not God. This line tells mankind a fact: God gave man intelligence when He created him. That is to say, man's intelligence came from God. This is a certainty. But why? After God created Adam, did Adam go to school? Did he know how to read? After God made various living creatures, did Adam recognize all of these creatures? Did God tell him what their names were? Of course, God also did not teach him how to come up with the names of these creatures. That is the truth! How, then, did Adam know how to give these living creatures their names and what kind of names to give them? This is related to the question of what God added to Adam when He created him. The facts prove that when God created man, He added His intelligence to him. This is a key point, so listen carefully. There is also another key point that you should understand: After Adam gave these living creatures their names, these names became set in God's vocabulary. Why do I mention this? Because this also involves God's disposition, and this is a point I must expound on further.

God created man, breathed life into him, and also gave him some of His intelligence, His abilities, and what He has and is. After God gave man all of these things, man was able to do some things independently and think on his own. If what man comes up with and does is good in the eyes of God, then God accepts it and does not interfere. If what man does is right, God will let it stand. So, what does the phrase "whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" indicate? It indicates that God did not see fit to alter any of the names given to the various living creatures. Whatever name Adam called a creature, God would say "So it is," affirming the creature's name. Did God express any opinion on the matter? No, He certainly did not. So, what do you gather from this? God gave man intelligence and man used his God-given intelligence to do things. If what man does is positive in the eyes of God, then it is affirmed, acknowledged, and accepted by God without any judgment or criticism. This is something no person or evil spirit, or Satan, can do. Do you see a revelation of God's disposition here? Would a human being, a corrupted person, or Satan permit anyone else to do something in their name, right under their nose? Of course not! Would they fight over this position with that other person or other force that is different from them? Of course they would! If it were a corrupted person or Satan who was with Adam at that time, they would have certainly repudiated what Adam was doing. To prove that they have the ability to think independently and have their own unique insights, they would have absolutely denied everything Adam did: "You want to call it this? Well, I'm not going to call it this, I'm going to call it that; you called it Tom but I'm going to call it Harry. I have to show how clever I am." What kind of nature is this? Is it not wildly arrogant? And what of God? Does He have such a disposition? Did God have any unusual objections to what Adam was doing? The answer is unequivocally no! Of the disposition God reveals, there is not the slightest hint of argumentativeness, arrogance, or self-righteousness. That much is clear here. This may appear to be a minor point, but if you do not understand God's essence, if your

heart does not try to figure out how God acts and what God's attitude is, then you will not know God's disposition or see the expression and revelation of God's disposition. Is that not so? Do you agree with what I just explained to you? In response to Adam's actions, God did not grandiosely proclaim, "You have done well, you have done right, and I concur!" In His heart, however, God approved, appreciated, and applauded what Adam did. This was the first thing since creation that man had done for God at His instruction. It was something man did in God's stead and on God's behalf. In God's eyes, this arose out of the intelligence He bestowed upon man. God saw it as a good thing, a positive thing. What Adam did at that time was the first manifestation of God's intelligence in man. It was a fine manifestation from God's point of view. What I want to tell you here is that God's aim in imparting to man something of what He has and is and of His intelligence was so that mankind could be the living creature that manifests Him. For such a living creature to act on His behalf was precisely what God had been longing to see.

3. God Makes Coats of Skins for Adam and Eve

Gen 3:20–21 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. To Adam also and to his wife did Jehovah God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Let us take a look at this third passage, which states that there is indeed meaning behind the name Adam gave Eve. This shows that after being created, Adam had his own thoughts and understood many things. But for now, we are not going to study or explore what he understood or how much he understood, because that is not My main aim in discussing the third passage. So, what is the main point I want to highlight? Let us take a look at the line, "To Adam also and to his wife did Jehovah God make coats of skins, and clothed them." If we do not discuss this line of Scripture in our fellowship today, you might never realize the deeper implications of these words. First, let Me give some clues. Imagine, if you will, the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve living in it. God goes to visit them, but they hide because they are naked. God cannot see them, and after He calls out to them, they say, "We dare not see You for our bodies are naked." They do not dare to see God because they are naked. So, what does Jehovah God do for them? The original text says: "To Adam also and to his wife did Jehovah God make coats of skins, and clothed them." From this, do you understand what God used to make their clothes? God used animal skins to make their clothes. That is to say, God made coats of fur for man to wear as clothing. These were the first pieces of clothing God made for man. A fur coat is a luxurious item by today's standards and not something everyone can afford to wear. If someone asks you: "What was the first piece of clothing worn by our ancestors?" You can answer: "It was a fur coat." "Who made this fur coat?" You can then respond: "God made it!" That is the main point here: This clothing was made by God. Is that not something worth discussing? After hearing My description, has an image emerged in your mind? You should have at least a rough outline. The point of telling you

this today is not so you know what man's first piece of clothing was. What, then, is the point? The point is not the fur coat, but how people come to know—as revealed by God in what He did here—His disposition, what He has, and what He is.

"To Adam also and to his wife did Jehovah God make coats of skins, and clothed them." In this scene, what kind of role do we see God assume when He is with Adam and Eve? In what way does God manifest Himself, in this world with only two human beings? Does He manifest Himself in the role of God? Brothers and sisters from Hong Kong, please answer. (In the role of a parent.) Brothers and sisters from South Korea, what kind of role do you think God appears as? (Head of the family.) Brothers and sisters from Taiwan, what do you think? (The role of someone in Adam and Eve's family, the role of a family member.) Some of you think God appears as a family member of Adam and Eve, while some say God appears as the head of the family and others say as a parent. All of these are very appropriate. But do you see what I am getting at? God created these two people and treated them as His companions. As their only family, God looked after their lives and took care of their food, clothing and shelter needs. Here, God appears as a parent of Adam and Eve. While God does this, man does not see how lofty God is; he does not see God's supremacy, His mystery, and especially not His wrath or majesty. All he sees is God's humbleness, His affection, His concern for man and His responsibility and care for him. The attitude and way in which God treated Adam and Eve is akin to how parents show concern for their children. It is also like the way parents love, look after, and care for their own sons and daughters—real, visible, and tangible. Instead of elevating Himself to a high and mighty position, God personally used skins to make clothing for man. It does not matter whether this fur coat was used to cover their modesty or to shield them from the cold. What matters is that this clothing for covering man's body was personally made by God with His own hands. Rather than simply thinking the clothing into existence or using some other miraculous means, as people might imagine God would do, God legitimately did something that man would have thought God would not and should not do. This might seem like a trivial thing—some people might not even think it is worth mentioning—but it allows any follower of God who was beset with vague conceptions about Him to gain an insight into His genuineness and loveliness, and to see His faithfulness and humbleness. It makes insufferably arrogant people who think they are high and mighty bow their conceited heads in shame in the face of God's genuineness and humbleness. Here, God's genuineness and humbleness further enables people to see how lovable He is. By contrast, the "immense" God, "lovable" God, and "omnipotent" God people hold in their hearts has become trifling and ugly, and crumbles at the slightest touch. When you see this verse and hear this story, do you look down upon God because He did such a thing? Some people might, but others will have the opposite reaction. They will think God is genuine and lovable, and it is precisely God's genuineness and loveliness that moves them. The more they see the real side of God, the more they can appreciate the true existence of God's love, the importance of God in their hearts, and how He stands beside them at every moment.

Now, let us relate our discussion back to the present. If God could do these various little things for the people He created at the very beginning, even things that people would never dare think of or expect, then could God do such things for people today? Some say, "Yes!" Why is that? Because God's essence is not feigned, and His loveliness is not feigned. God's essence truly exists and is not something added on by others, and certainly not something that changes with different times, places, and eras. God's genuineness and loveliness can truly be brought out only by doing something people think is unremarkable and insignificant—something so trifling that people would not even think He would ever do it. God is not pretentious. There is no exaggeration, disguise, pride, or arrogance in His disposition and essence. He never boasts, but instead loves, shows concern for, looks after, and leads, with faithfulness and sincerity, the human beings He created. No matter how little people may appreciate, feel, or see what God does. He most certainly is doing it. Would knowing that God has such an essence affect people's love for Him? Would it influence their fear of God? I hope when you understand the real side of God, you will grow even closer to Him and be able to more truly appreciate His love and care for mankind, as well as be able to give your heart to God and be delivered from suspicions and doubts about Him. God is quietly doing everything for man, doing it all silently through His sincerity, faithfulness, and love. But He never has any apprehensions or regrets over anything He does, nor does He ever need anyone to repay Him in any way or have intentions of ever obtaining anything from mankind. The only purpose of everything He has ever done is so He can receive mankind's true faith and love. And with that, I will end the first topic here.

Have these discussions helped you? How helpful have they been? (We have more understanding and knowledge of God's love.) (This method of fellowship can help us in the future to better appreciate God's word, to comprehend the emotions He had and the meanings behind the things He said when He said them, and to sense what He felt at the time.) Are any of you more keenly aware of God's actual existence after reading these words? Do you feel God's existence is no longer hollow or vague? Once you have this feeling, can you sense that God is right beside you? Perhaps the sensation is not obvious right now or you might not be able to feel it just yet. But one day, when you truly have a deep appreciation and real knowledge of God's disposition and essence in your heart, you will sense that God is right by your side—you just had never genuinely accepted God into your heart. And that is the truth!

What do you think of this approach to fellowship? Are you able to keep up? Do you think this type of fellowship about the topic of God's work and God's disposition is very heavy? How do you feel? (Very good, excited.) What made you feel good? Why were you excited? (It was like returning to the Garden of Eden, back to being by God's side.) "God's disposition" is actually a rather unfamiliar topic for people, because what you usually imagine, and what you read in books or hear in fellowships, tends to make you

feel a bit like a blind man touching an elephant—you are just feeling around with your hands, but you cannot actually visualize anything. Blindly fumbling around cannot give you even a rough understanding of God, let alone a clear concept of Him; it only further provokes your imagination, preventing you from precisely defining what God's disposition and essence are, and the uncertainties arising from your imagination will invariably fill your heart with doubts. When you cannot be certain about something but still try to understand it, there will always be contradictions and conflict in your heart, and even a sense of disturbance, leaving you disoriented and confused. Is it not an agonizing thing to want to seek God, to know God, and see Him clearly, but never seem to be able to find the answers? Of course, these words are only targeted at those who desire to seek to fearfully revere and satisfy God. For people who do not pay any attention to such things, this actually does not matter, because what they hope for most is that the realness and existence of God are merely a legend or fantasy, so they can do whatever they want, so they can be the biggest and the most important, so they can commit evil deeds without regard for consequences, so they will not have to face punishment or bear any responsibility, and so that even the things that God says about evildoers will not apply to them. These people are not willing to comprehend God's disposition. They are sick and tired of trying to know God and everything about Him. They would prefer that God does not exist. These people oppose God, and they are among those who will be cast out.

Next, we will discuss the story of Noah and how it relates to the topic of God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself.

What do you see God doing to Noah in this part of the scriptures? Perhaps everyone sitting here knows something about it from reading the scriptures: God made Noah build the ark, then God destroyed the world with a flood. God had Noah build the ark to save his family of eight, which allowed them to survive and become the ancestors for the next generation of mankind. Let us now turn to Scripture.

B. Noah

1. God Intends to Destroy the World With a Flood and Instructs Noah to Build an Ark

Gen 6:9–14 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth. And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make you an ark of gopher wood; rooms shall you make in the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch.

Gen 6:18–22 But with you will I establish My covenant; and you shall come into the ark, you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all

flesh, two of every sort shall you bring into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come to you, to keep them alive. And take you to you of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to you; and it shall be for food for you, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Do you now have a general understanding of who Noah was after reading these two passages? What kind of person was Noah? The original text is: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations." According to the understanding of modern people, what kind of a person was a "just man" back in those days? A just man should be a perfect man. Do you know whether this perfect man was perfect in the eyes of man, or perfect in the eyes of God? Without a doubt, this perfect man was a perfect man in the eyes of God, but not in the eyes of man. This is for certain! This is because man is blind and cannot see, and only God looks upon the entire earth and every single person, and only God knew that Noah was a perfect man. Therefore, God's plan to destroy the world with a flood began from the moment He called upon Noah.

In that age, God intended to call upon Noah to do something very important. Why did this task have to be done? Because God had a plan in His heart at that moment. His plan was to destroy the world with a flood. Why would He destroy the world? As it says here: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." What do you gather from the phrase "the earth was filled with violence"? It was a phenomenon on earth wherein the world and its people had become corrupt to the extreme; hence, "the earth was filled with violence." In today's parlance, "filled with violence" would mean that everything is out of kilter. To man, it meant that all semblance of order was lost in every facet of life, and that everything had become chaotic and unmanageable. In God's eyes, it meant that the people of the world had become too corrupt. But corrupt to what extent? Corrupt to the extent that God could no longer bear to look upon or be patient with them. Corrupt to the extent that God intended to destroy them. When God resolved to destroy the world, He planned to find someone to build an ark. God chose Noah to perform this task; that is, He had Noah build an ark. Why did He choose Noah? In God's eyes, Noah was a righteous man; no matter what God instructed him to do, Noah did so accordingly. That is to say, Noah was willing to do whatever God told him to do. God wanted to find someone like this to work with Him, to complete what He had entrusted—to complete His work on earth. Back then, was there another person apart from Noah who could complete such a task? Certainly not! Noah was the only candidate, the only person who could complete what God entrusted, and so God chose him. But are God's limits and standards for saving people the same now as they were then? The answer is, there is definitely a difference! And why do I ask this? Noah was the only man righteous in God's eyes during that time, which implies that neither his wife nor any of his sons or daughters-in-law were righteous people, but God still spared them because of Noah. God did not place demands on them the way He does now, and instead kept all eight members of Noah's family alive. They received God's blessing because of Noah's righteousness. Without Noah, none of them could have completed what God had entrusted. Therefore, Noah was the only person who was supposed to survive that destruction of the world, and the others were just collateral beneficiaries. This shows that, in the era before God officially commenced His management work, the principles and standards with which He treated people and asked of them were relatively relaxed. To the people of today, the way God treated Noah's family of eight appears to lack "fairness." But compared to the great volume of work He now does on people and the great amount of His word He now conveys, God's treatment of Noah's family of eight was merely a work principle given the background of His work at the time. By comparison, did Noah's family of eight receive more from God, or do the people of today?

That Noah was called upon is a simple fact, but the main point of what we are talking about—God's disposition, His will, and His essence in this record—is not so simple. To understand these several aspects of God, we must first understand the kind of person God desires to call upon, and through this, understand His disposition, will, and essence. This is crucial. So in God's eyes, just what kind of a person is this man He calls upon? This must be a person who can listen to His words and who can follow His instructions. At the same time, this must also be a person with a sense of responsibility, someone who will carry out God's word by treating it as the responsibility and duty they are bound to fulfill. Then does this person need to be someone who knows God? No. Back in that time, Noah had not heard much of God's teachings or experienced any of God's work. Therefore, Noah had very little knowledge of God. Although it is recorded here that Noah walked with God, did he ever see God's person? The answer is definitely no! Because in those days, only God's messengers came among people. While they could represent God in saying and doing things, they were merely conveying God's will and His intentions. God's person was not revealed to man face-to-face. In this part of the scriptures, all we basically see is what Noah had to do and what God's instructions to him were. So what was the essence expressed by God here? Everything God does is planned with precision. When He sees a thing or a situation occurring, in His eyes there is a standard to measure it with, and this standard determines whether He launches a plan to deal with it or what approach to take in dealing with this thing or situation. He is not indifferent or lacking in feelings toward everything. It is actually the complete opposite. There is a verse here stating what God said to Noah: "The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." When God said this, did He mean He was destroying only humans? No! God said He was going to destroy all living things of flesh. Why did God want destruction? There is another revelation of God's disposition here; in God's eyes, there is a limit to His patience toward man's corruption, toward the filthiness, violence, and disobedience of all flesh. What is His limit? It is as God said: "God looked on the

earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth." What does the phrase "for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth" mean? It means any living things, including those who followed God, those who called on the name of God. those who once made burnt offerings to God, those who verbally acknowledged God and even praised God—once their behavior was full of corruption and reached God's eyes, He would have to destroy them. That was God's limit. So to what extent did God remain patient with man and the corruption of all flesh? To the extent that all people, whether followers of God or unbelievers, were not walking the right path. To the extent that man was not just morally corrupt and full of evil, but where there was no one who believed in God's existence, let alone anyone who believed that the world is ruled by God and that God can bring people light and the right path. To the extent that man despised God's existence and did not permit God to exist. Once man's corruption reached this point, God could stand it no longer. What would replace it? The coming of God's wrath and God's punishment. Was that not a partial revelation of God's disposition? In this current age, are there no men who are righteous in the eyes of God? Are there no men who are perfect in the eyes of God? Is this age one in which the behavior of all flesh on earth is corrupt in the eyes of God? In this day and age, are all people of flesh—apart from those God wants to make complete, and those who can follow God and accept His salvation—not challenging the limit of God's patience? Is everything that happens beside you—what you see with your eyes and hear with your ears, and personally experience every day in this world—not full of violence? In God's eyes, should such a world, such an age, not be ended? Though the background of the current age is completely different from the background of Noah's time, the feelings and wrath God has toward man's corruption remain exactly the same. God is able to be patient because of His work, but in light of the circumstances and conditions, in God's eyes this world should have been destroyed long ago. The circumstances are far beyond what they were when the world was destroyed by flood. But what is the difference? This is also the thing that saddens God's heart the most, and perhaps something none of you can appreciate.

When He destroyed the world by flood, God was able to call upon Noah to build an ark and do some of the preparation work. God could call upon one man—Noah—to do these series of things for Him. But in this current age, God does not have anybody to call upon. Why is that? Every single person sitting here probably understands and knows the reason very well. Do you need Me to spell it out? Saying it out loud might make you lose face and get everybody upset. Some people might say: "Although we are not righteous people and we are not perfect people in the eyes of God, if God were to instruct us to do something, we would still be capable of doing it. Before, when He said a catastrophic disaster was coming, we started preparing food and items that would be needed in a disaster. Wasn't all of this done in accordance with God's demands? Weren't we really cooperating with God's work? Can't these things we did be compared to what

Noah did? Isn't doing what we did true obedience? Weren't we following God's instructions? Didn't we do what God said because we have faith in God's words? Then why is God still sad? Why does God say He has no one to call upon?" Is there any difference between your actions and those of Noah's? What is the difference? (Preparing food today for the disaster was our own intention.) (Our actions cannot amount to being "righteous," whereas Noah was a righteous man in God's eyes.) What you said is not too far off. What Noah did was essentially different to what people are doing now. When Noah did as God instructed, he did not know what God's intentions were. He did not know what God wanted to accomplish. God had only given him a command and instructed him to do something, and without much explanation, Noah went ahead and did it. He did not try to secretly figure out God's intentions, nor did he resist God or show insincerity. He just went and did it accordingly with a pure and simple heart. Whatever God had him do, he did, and obeying and listening to God's word underpinned his belief in what he did. That was how straightforwardly and simply he dealt with what God entrusted. His essence—the essence of his actions was obedience, not secondguessing, not resisting, and moreover, not thinking of his own personal interests or his gains and losses. Further, when God said He would destroy the world with a flood, Noah did not ask when or ask what would become of things, and he certainly did not ask God how He was going to destroy the world. He simply did as God instructed. However God wanted it to be made and made with what, he did exactly as God asked and also commenced action immediately. He acted according to God's instructions with an attitude of wanting to satisfy God. Was he doing it to help himself avoid the disaster? No. Did he ask God how much longer it would be before the world was to be destroyed? He did not. Did he ask God or did he know how long it would take to build the ark? He did not know that either. He simply obeyed, listened, and acted accordingly. The people of now are not the same: As soon as a bit of information is leaked through God's word, as soon as people sense a mere rustle of leaves in the wind, they immediately spring into action, no matter what and regardless of the price, to prepare what they will eat, drink, and use in the aftermath, even planning their escape routes for when the disaster strikes. Even more interesting is that, at this key moment, human brains are very good at "getting" the job done." Under circumstances where God has not given any instructions, man can plan for everything very appropriately. You could use the word "perfect" to describe such plans. As for what God says, what God's intentions are, or what God wants, no one cares and no one tries to appreciate it. Is that not the biggest difference between the people of today and Noah?

In this record of Noah's story, do you see a part of God's disposition? There is a limit to God's patience toward man's corruption, filthiness, and violence. When He reaches that limit, He will no longer be patient and will instead begin His new management and new plan, start to do what He has to do, reveal His deeds and the other side of His disposition. This action of His is not to demonstrate that He must never be offended by

man or that He is full of authority and wrath, and it is not to show that He can destroy humanity. It is that His disposition and His holy essence can no longer allow or have the patience for this kind of humanity to live before Him, to live under His dominion. That is to say, when all of mankind is against Him, when there is no one He can save on the whole earth, He will no longer have patience for such a humanity and will, without any misgiving, carry out His plan—to destroy this kind of humanity. Such an act by God is determined by His disposition. This is a necessary consequence, and a consequence that every created being under God's dominion must bear. Does this not show that in this current age, God cannot wait to complete His plan and save the people He wants to save? Under these circumstances, what does God care about the most? Not how those who do not follow Him at all or those who oppose Him anyway treat Him or resist Him, or how mankind is slandering Him. He only cares about whether those who follow Him, the objects of His salvation in His management plan, have been made complete by Him, whether they have become worthy of His satisfaction. As for the people other than those who follow Him, He merely occasionally provides a bit of punishment to express His wrath. For example: tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. At the same time, He is also strongly protecting and looking after those who follow Him and are about to be saved by Him. God's disposition is this: On the one hand, He can have extreme patience and tolerance toward the people He intends to make complete, and He can wait for them for as long as He possibly can; on the other hand, God passionately hates and loathes the Satan-type of people who do not follow Him and oppose Him. Although He does not care whether these Satan-types follow Him or worship Him, He still detests them while having patience for them in His heart, and as He determines the ending of these Satan-types, He is also waiting for the arrival of the steps of His management plan.

Let us look at the next passage.

2. God's Blessing to Noah After the Flood

Gen 9:1–6 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, and on every fowl of the air, on all that moves on the earth, and on all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.

What do you see from this passage? Why did I choose these verses? Why did I not select an excerpt about Noah and his family's life on the ark? Because that information does not have much connection to the topic we are communicating today. What we are

focusing on is God's disposition. If you want to know about those details, then you can pick up the Bible to have a read yourselves. We will not talk about that here. The main thing we are talking about today is about how to know God's actions.

After Noah accepted God's instructions and built the ark and lived through the days in which God used a flood to destroy the world, his whole family of eight survived. Apart from Noah's family of eight, all of mankind was destroyed, and all living things on earth were destroyed. To Noah, God gave blessings, and said some things to him and his sons. These things were what God was bestowing upon him and also God's blessing upon him. This is the blessing and promise God gives to someone who can listen to Him and accept His instructions, and is also the way God rewards people. That is to say, regardless of whether Noah was a perfect man or a righteous man in God's eyes, and regardless of how much he knew about God, in short, Noah and his three sons all listened to God's words, cooperated with God's work, and did what they were supposed to do in accordance with God's instructions. As a result, they preserved humans and various kinds of living things for God in the wake of the destruction of the world by flood, making a great contribution to the next step of God's management plan. Because of everything he had done, God blessed him. Maybe for the people of today, what Noah did was not even worth mentioning. Some might even think: "Noah did not do anything; God had made up His mind to spare him, so he was definitely going to be spared. His survival was not due to his own accomplishments. This is what God wanted to make happen, because man is passive." But that is not what God was thinking. To God, no matter whether a person is great or insignificant, as long as they can listen to Him, obey His instructions and what He entrusts, and can cooperate with His work, His will, and His plan, so that His will and His plan can be accomplished smoothly, then that conduct is worthy of His remembrance and of receiving His blessing. God treasures such people, and He cherishes their actions and their love and affection for Him. This is God's attitude. So why did God bless Noah? Because this is how God treats such actions and the obedience of man.

In regard to God's blessing of Noah, some people will say: "If man listens to God and satisfies God, then God should bless man. Doesn't that go without saying?" Can we say that? Some people say: "No." Why can we not say that? Some people say: "Man is not worthy of enjoying God's blessing." That is not entirely right. Because when a person accepts what God entrusts to them, God has a standard for judging whether their actions are good or bad and whether the person has obeyed, and whether the person has satisfied God's will and whether what they do meets that standard. What God cares about is the person's heart, not their actions on the surface. It is not the case that God should bless someone as long as they do something, regardless of how they do it. This is a misunderstanding people have about God. God looks not just at the end result of things, but places more emphasis on how a person's heart is and how a person's attitude is during the development of things, and He looks at whether there is obedience,

consideration, and the desire to satisfy God in their heart. How much did Noah know about God at the time? Was it as much as the doctrines you know now? In terms of aspects of the truth such as concepts and knowledge of God, did he receive as much watering and shepherding as you? No, he did not! But there is one fact that is undeniable: In the consciousness, minds, and even the depths of the hearts of the people of today, their concepts of and attitudes toward God are vague and ambiguous. You could even say that a portion of people hold a negative attitude toward God's existence. But in Noah's heart and his consciousness, God's existence was absolute and beyond the slightest doubt, and thus his obedience to God was unadulterated and could stand the test. His heart was pure and open toward God. He did not need too much knowledge of doctrines to convince himself to follow every word of God, nor did he need a lot of facts to prove God's existence in order to be able to accept what God entrusted him with and to be capable of doing whatever God had him do. This is the essential difference between Noah and the people of today. It is also the true definition of precisely what a perfect man is in God's eyes. What God wants is people like Noah. He is the type of person God praises and is also precisely the kind of person God blesses. Have you received any enlightenment from this? People look at people from the outside, while what God looks at is people's hearts and their essence. God does not allow anyone to have any half-heartedness or doubts toward Him, nor does He permit people to suspect or test Him in any way. Hence, even though the people of today are face to face with God's word—you could even say face to face with God—due to something deep inside their hearts, the existence of their corrupt essence, and their hostile attitude toward Him, people have been obstructed from having a true belief in God and blocked from being obedient to Him. Because of this, it is very difficult for them to obtain the same blessing that God bestowed upon Noah.

Next, let us take a look at this part of the scriptures about how God used the rainbow as a symbol of His covenant with man.

3. God Uses the Rainbow as a Symbol of His Covenant With Man

Gen 9:11–13 And I will establish My covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth.

Most people know what a rainbow is and have heard of some stories related to rainbows. As for the story about the rainbow in the Bible, some people believe it and some treat it as legend, while others do not believe it at all. No matter what, all of the events that happened in relation to the rainbow were the work of God and took place in the process of God's management of man. These events have been recorded exactly in

the Bible. These records do not tell us what mood God was in at the time or the intentions behind these words God said. Moreover, no one can appreciate what God was feeling when He said them. However, God's state of mind regarding this entire event is revealed between the lines of the text. It is as though His thoughts at the time leap off the page through each word and phrase of God's word.

God's thoughts are what people should be concerned about and what they should be trying to get to know the most. This is because God's thoughts are inextricably related to man's understanding of God, and man's understanding of God is an indispensable link to man's entry into life. So, what was God thinking at the time when these events happened?

Originally, God created a humanity that in His eyes was very good and close to Him, but they were destroyed by flood after rebelling against Him. Did it hurt God that such a humanity just instantly vanished like that? Of course it hurt! So what was His expression of this pain? How was it recorded in the Bible? It was recorded in the Bible in these words: "And I will establish My covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." This simple sentence reveals God's thoughts. This destruction of the world pained Him very much. In man's words, He was very sad. We can imagine: How did the earth that was once full of life look like after being destroyed by the flood? What did the earth, that was once full of human beings, look like at that time? No human habitation, no living creatures, water everywhere and utter devastation on the surface of the water. Was such a scene God's original intention when He created the world? Of course not! God's original intention was to see life all across the land, to see the human beings He created worshiping Him, not just for Noah to be the only one worshiping Him or the only one who could answer His call to complete what was entrusted to him. When humanity disappeared, God saw not what He had originally intended but the complete opposite. How could His heart not be in pain? So when He was revealing His disposition and expressing His emotions, God made a decision. What kind of a decision did He make? To make a bow in the cloud (that is, the rainbows that we see) as a covenant with man, a promise that God would not destroy mankind with a flood again. At the same time, it was also to tell people that God had destroyed the world with a flood, so that mankind would forever remember why God would do such a thing.

Was the destruction of the world at that time something God wanted? It was definitely not what God wanted. We might be able to imagine a small part of the pitiful sight of the earth after the destruction of the world, but we cannot come close to imagining what the scene was like at the time in God's eyes. We can say that, whether it is the people of now or then, nobody is able to imagine or appreciate what God was feeling when He saw that scene, that image of the world following its destruction by flood. God was forced to do this by man's disobedience, but the pain suffered by God's heart from this destruction of the world by flood is a reality no one can fathom or appreciate. That is why

God made a covenant with mankind, through which He aimed to tell people to remember that God once did something like this, and to swear to them that God would never destroy the world in such a way again. In this covenant we see God's heart—we see that God's heart was in pain when He destroyed this humanity. In the language of man, when God destroyed mankind and saw mankind disappearing, His heart was weeping and bleeding. Is that not the best way to describe it? These words are used by humans to illustrate human emotions, but since man's language is too lacking, using them to describe God's feelings and emotions does not seem too bad to Me, and nor are they too excessive. At least it gives you a very vivid, very apt understanding of what God's mood was like at the time. What will you think of now when you see a rainbow again? At least you will remember how God was once in sorrow over destroying the world by flood. You will remember how, even though God hated this world and despised this humanity, when He destroyed the human beings He created with His own hands, His heart was hurting, struggling to let go, feeling reluctant, and finding it hard to bear. His only comfort was in Noah's family of eight. It was Noah's cooperation that made His painstaking efforts of creating all things not be in vain. At a time when God was suffering, this was the only thing that could make up for His pain. From that point, God placed all of His expectations of humanity on Noah's family, hoping they could live under His blessings and not His curse, hoping that they would never see God destroy the world with a flood again, and also hoping that they would not be destroyed.

What part of God's disposition should we learn about from this? God had despised man because man was hostile to Him, but in His heart, His care, concern, and mercy for humanity remained unchanged. Even when He destroyed mankind, His heart remained unchanged. When humanity was full of corruption and disobedient toward God to a grievous extent, God had to destroy this humanity, because of His disposition and His essence, and in accordance with His principles. But because of God's essence, He still pitied mankind, and even wanted to use various ways to redeem mankind so they could continue to live. Man, however, opposed God, continued to disobey God, and refused to accept God's salvation; that is, refused to accept His good intentions. No matter how God called to them, reminded them, supplied them, helped them, or tolerated them, man did not understand or appreciate it, nor did they pay attention. In His pain, God still did not forget to grant man His maximum tolerance, waiting for man to reverse course. After He reached His limit, He did what He had to do without any hesitation. In other words, there was a specific time period and process from the moment God planned to destroy mankind to the start of His work in destroying mankind. This process existed for the purpose of enabling man to reverse course, and this was the last chance God gave to man. So what did God do in this period before destroying mankind? God did a significant amount of reminding and exhorting work. No matter how much pain and sorrow God's heart was in, He continued to vest His care, concern, and abundant mercy in humanity. What do we see from this? Undoubtedly, we see that God's love for mankind is real and

not something He merely pays lip service to. It is actual, tangible and appreciable, not feigned, adulterated, deceitful or pretentious. God never uses any deception or creates false images to make people see that He is lovable. He never uses false testimony to let people see His loveliness, or to flaunt His loveliness and holiness. Are these aspects of God's disposition not worthy of man's love? Are they not worth worshiping? Are they not worth cherishing? At this point, I want to ask you: After hearing these words, do you think God's greatness is merely empty words on a sheet of paper? Is God's loveliness just empty words? No! Certainly not! God's supremacy, greatness, holiness, tolerance, love, and so forth—every detail of every one of the various aspects of God's disposition and essence find practical expression every time He does His work, are embodied in His will toward man, and are also fulfilled and reflected in every person. Regardless of whether you have felt it before, God is caring for every person in every possible way, using His sincere heart, wisdom, and various methods to warm each person's heart, and awaken each person's spirit. This is an indisputable fact. No matter how many people are sitting here, each person has had different experiences of and feelings toward God's tolerance, patience, and loveliness. These experiences of God and these feelings or perception of Him—in short, all of these positive things are from God. So by integrating everyone's experiences and knowledge of God and combining them with our readings of these Bible passages today, do you now have a more real and proper understanding of God?

After reading this story and understanding some of God's disposition revealed through this event, what kind of new knowledge do you have of God? Has it given you a deeper understanding of God and His heart? Do you feel different now when you revisit Noah's story? In your opinion, was it unnecessary to fellowship these Bible verses? Now that we have fellowshiped them, do you think it was unnecessary? It surely was necessary! Even though what we read is a story, it is a true record of the work God has done. My aim was not to enable you to comprehend the details of these stories or this character, nor was it so you can go study this character, and certainly not so you will go back and study the Bible again. Do you understand? So have these stories aided in your knowledge of God? What has this story added to your understanding of God? Tell us, brothers and sisters from Hong Kong. (We saw that God's love is something none of us corrupt humans possess.) Tell us, brothers and sisters from South Korea. (God's love for man is real. God's love for man carries His disposition and carries His greatness, holiness, supremacy, and His tolerance. It is worth us trying to gain a deeper understanding of it.) (Through the fellowshiping just then, on the one hand, I can see God's righteous and holy disposition, and I can also see the concern God has for mankind, God's mercy toward mankind, and that everything God does and every thought and idea He has reveals His love and concern for humanity.) (My understanding in the past was that God used a flood to destroy the world because mankind had become evil to a grievous extent, and it was as though God destroyed this humanity because He loathed them. It was only after God talked about Noah's story today and said that God's

heart was bleeding that I realize that God was actually reluctant to let go of this humanity. It was only because mankind was too disobedient that God had no choice but to destroy them. In fact, God's heart at this time was very sad. From this, I can see in God's disposition His care and concern for mankind. This is something I didn't know before.) Very good! You can go next. (I was very affected after listening. I've read the Bible in the past, but I've never had an experience like today where God directly dissects these things so we can get to know Him. For God to take us along like this to get to see the Bible enabled me to know that God's essence before man's corruption was love and care for mankind. From the time man became corrupted to these current last days, even though God has a righteous disposition, His love and care remain unchanged. This shows that the essence of God's love, from creation until now, regardless of whether man is corrupted, never changes.) (Today I saw that God's essence will not alter due to a change in time or the location of His work. I also saw that, no matter if God is creating the world or destroying it after man becomes corrupted, everything He does has meaning and contains His disposition. I therefore saw that God's love is infinite and immeasurable, and I also saw, as the other brothers and sisters mentioned, God's care and mercy toward mankind when He destroyed the world.) (These were things I indeed did not know about before. After listening today, I feel that God is truly credible, truly trustworthy, worth believing in, and that He indeed exists. I can genuinely appreciate in my heart that God's disposition and love is really this concrete. This is a feeling I have after listening today.) Excellent! It seems you have all taken what you have heard to heart.

Have you noticed something from all Bible verses, including all of the Bible stories we fellowshiped about today? Has God ever used His own language to express His own thoughts or explain His love and care for humanity? Is there a record of Him using plain language to state how much He is concerned for or loves mankind? No. Is that not right? There are so many among you who have read the Bible or books other than the Bible. Have any of you seen such words? The answer is definitely no! That is, in the records of the Bible, including God's words or the documenting of His work, God has never in any era or any period used His own methods to describe His feelings or express His love and care for mankind, nor has God ever used speech or any actions to convey His feelings and emotions—is that not a fact? Why do I say that? Why do I have to mention this? It is because this also embodies God's loveliness and His disposition.

God created mankind; regardless of whether they have been corrupted or whether they follow Him, God treats human beings as His most cherished loved ones—or as human beings would say, the people dearest to Him—and not as His playthings. Although God says He is the Creator and that man is His creation, which may sound like there is a slight difference in rank, the reality is that everything God has done for mankind far exceeds a relationship of this nature. God loves mankind, cares for mankind, and shows concern for mankind, as well as constantly and unceasingly providing for

mankind. He never feels in His heart that this is additional work or something that deserves a lot of credit. Nor does He feel that saving humanity, supplying them, and granting them everything, is making a huge contribution to mankind. He simply provides for mankind quietly and silently, in His own way and through His own essence and what He has and is. No matter how much provision and how much help mankind receives from Him, God never thinks about or tries to take credit. This is determined by the essence of God, and is also precisely a true expression of God's disposition. This is why, regardless of whether it is in the Bible or any other books, we never find God expressing His thoughts, and we never find God describing or declaring to humans, with the aim of making mankind be grateful toward Him or praise Him, why He does these things, or why He cares so much for mankind. Even when He is hurt, when His heart is in extreme pain, He never forgets His responsibility toward mankind or His concern for mankind; all while He bears this hurt and pain alone in silence. To the contrary, God continues to provide for mankind as He has always done. Even though mankind often praises God or bears witness to Him, none of this behavior is demanded by God. This is because God never intends for any of the good things He does for mankind to be exchanged for gratitude or to be paid back. On the other hand, those who can fear God and shun evil, those who can truly follow God, listen to Him and are loyal to Him, and those who can obey Him—these are the people who will often receive God's blessings, and God will bestow such blessings without reservation. Moreover, the blessings people receive from God are often beyond their imagination, and also beyond anything human beings can justify through what they have done or what price they have paid. When mankind is enjoying God's blessings, does anyone care about what God is doing? Does anyone show any concern for how God is feeling? Does anyone try to appreciate God's pain? The answer is an emphatic no! Can any human being, including Noah, appreciate the pain God was feeling at that moment? Can anyone appreciate why God would establish such a covenant? They cannot! Mankind does not appreciate God's pain not because they cannot understand God's pain, and not because of the gap between God and man or the difference in their status; rather, it is because mankind does not care at all about any of God's feelings. Mankind thinks God is independent—that God does not need people to care about Him, to understand Him or show Him consideration. God is God, so He has no pain, no emotions; He will not be sad, He does not feel sorrow, He does not even cry. God is God, so He does not need any emotional expressions and He does not need any emotional comfort. If, under certain circumstances, He does need these things, then He can cope alone and will not require any assistance from mankind. Conversely, it is the weak, immature humans who need God's consolation, provision, encouragement, and even for Him to comfort their emotions at all times and all places. Such things lurk deep inside the hearts of mankind: Man is the weak one; they need God to look after them in every way, they deserve all the care they receive from God, and they should demand from God whatever they feel should be theirs. God is the strong

one; He has everything, and He ought to be mankind's guardian and bestower of blessings. Since He is already God, He is omnipotent and does not ever need anything from mankind.

As man does not pay attention to any of God's revelations, he has never felt God's sorrow, pain, or joy. But conversely, God knows all of man's expressions like the palm of His hand. God supplies everyone's needs at all times and in all places, observing each person's changing thoughts and thus comforting and exhorting them, and guiding and illuminating them. In terms of all the things God has done on mankind and all of the prices He has paid because of them, can people find a passage in the Bible or from anything God has said until now that clearly states that God will demand something from man? No! To the contrary, no matter how people ignore God's thinking, He still repeatedly leads mankind, repeatedly provides for mankind and helps them, to enable them to follow God's way so they can attain the beautiful destination He has prepared for them. When it comes to God, what He has and is, His grace, His mercy, and all His rewards, will be bestowed without reservation upon those who love and follow Him. But He never reveals to any person the pain He has suffered or His state of mind, and He never complains about anyone not being considerate toward Him or not knowing His will. He simply bears all of this in silence, waiting for the day mankind will be able to understand.

Why do I say these things here? What do you see from the things I have said? There is something in God's essence and disposition that is all too easy to overlook, something that is only possessed by God and not by any person, including those others think of as great people, good people, or the God of their imagination. What is this thing? It is God's selflessness. When speaking of selflessness, you might think you are also very selfless, because when it comes to your children, you never bargain or haggle with them, or you think you are also very selfless when it comes to your parents. No matter what you think, at least you have a concept of the word "selfless" and think of it as a positive word, and that being a selfless person is very noble. When you are selfless, you esteem yourself highly. But there is no one who can see God's selflessness in all things, among people, events, and objects, and in His work. Why is this the case? Because man is too selfish! Why do I say that? Mankind lives in a material world. You may follow God, but you never see or appreciate how God provides for you, loves you, and shows concern for you. So what do you see? You see your blood relatives who love you or dote on you. You see the things that are beneficial to your flesh, you care about the people and things you love. This is man's so-called selflessness. Such "selfless" people, however, are never concerned about the God that gives life to them. In contrast to that of God, man's selflessness becomes selfish and despicable. The selflessness man believes in is empty and unrealistic, adulterated, incompatible with God, and unrelated to God. Man's selflessness is for himself, while God's selflessness is a true revelation of His essence. It is precisely due to God's selflessness that man is constantly provided for by Him. You might not be too deeply affected by this topic I am talking about today and are merely nodding in approval, but when you try to appreciate God's heart in your heart, you will unwittingly discover this: Among all the people, matters, and things you can sense in this world, only God's selflessness is real and concrete, because only God's love for you is unconditional and unblemished. Apart from God, anyone else's so-called unselfishness is feigned, superficial, inauthentic; it has a purpose, certain intentions, carries a tradeoff, and cannot stand to be tested. You could even say that it is filthy and contemptible. Are you in agreement with these words?

I know you are very unfamiliar with these topics and need a bit of time for them to sink in before you can truly understand. The more unfamiliar you are with these issues and topics, the more it proves that these topics are missing in your heart. If I were never to mention these topics, would any among you know anything about them? I believe you would never get to know them. That is for certain. No matter how much you can comprehend or understand, these topics I speak of are, in short, what people most lack and what they should know about the most. These topics are very important for everyone—they are precious and they are life, and they are things you must possess for the road ahead. Without these words as guidance, without your understanding of God's disposition and essence, you will always carry a question mark when it comes to God. How can you believe in God properly if you do not even understand Him? You know nothing of God's emotions, His will, His state of mind, what He is thinking, what makes Him sad, and what makes Him happy, so how can you be considerate toward God's heart?

Whenever God is upset, He faces a mankind that does not pay any attention to Him at all, a mankind that follows Him and claims to love Him but completely neglects His feelings. How can His heart not hurt? In God's management work, He sincerely carries out His work on and speaks to each person, and He faces them without reservation or concealment; but conversely, every person who follows Him is closed off toward Him, and no one is willing to actively get closer to Him, understand His heart, or pay attention to His feelings. Even those who want to become God's intimates do not want to get close to Him, to be considerate toward His heart, or try to understand Him. When God is joyful and happy, there is no one to share His happiness. When God is misunderstood by people, there is no one to comfort His wounded heart. When His heart is hurting, there is not a single person willing to let Him confide in them. Over these thousands of years of God's management work, there have been none who understand God's emotions, none who comprehend or appreciate them, let alone any who could stand beside God to share in His joys and sorrows. God is lonely. He is lonely! God is lonely not just because corrupted mankind opposes Him, but more because those who seek to be spiritual, those who seek to know God and understand Him, and even those who are willing to expend their entire lives for Him, also do not know His thoughts or understand His disposition and His emotions.

At the end of Noah's story, we see that God used an unusual method to express His feelings at the time. It was a very special method: to make a covenant with man which declared the end of God's destruction of the world with the flood. On the surface, making a covenant may seem like a very ordinary thing. It is nothing more than using words to bind two parties and prevent them from violating their agreement, so as to protect both of their interests. In form, it is a very ordinary thing, but from the motivations behind and intent of God in doing this thing, it is a true revelation of God's disposition and state of mind. If you just put these words aside and ignore them, if I never tell you the truth of things, then humanity will really never know God's thinking. Perhaps in your imagination God was smiling when He made this covenant, or perhaps His expression was serious, but regardless of what most ordinary expression people imagine God to have had, no one would have been able to see God's heart or His pain, let alone His loneliness. No one can make God trust them or be worthy of God's trust, or be someone He can express His thoughts or confide His pain to. That is why God had no choice but to do such a thing. On the surface, God did an easy thing in bidding farewell to humanity as it was, settling the issue of the past and bringing to a perfect end His destruction of the world by flood. However, God buried the pain from this moment deep inside His heart. At a time when God did not have anyone to confide in, He made a covenant with mankind, telling them that He would not destroy the world with a flood again. When a rainbow appeared, it was to remind people that such a thing had happened and to warn them to refrain from evil. Even in such a painful state, God did not forget about mankind and still showed so much concern for them. Is this not God's love and unselfishness? But what do people think of when they are suffering? Is this not the time they need God the most? At times like this, people always drag God over so He can comfort them. No matter when, God will never let people down, and He will always enable people to get out of their predicaments and live in the light. Although God so provides for mankind, in man's heart God is nothing more than a soothing pill, a comfort tonic. When God is suffering, when His heart is wounded, having a created being or any person keep Him company or comfort Him would undoubtedly be just an extravagant wish for God. Man never pays attention to God's feelings, so God never asks nor expects there to be someone who can comfort Him. He merely uses His own methods to express His mood. People do not think it is a great hardship for God to go through some suffering, but only when you truly try to understand God, when you can genuinely appreciate God's earnest intentions in everything He does, can you feel God's greatness and His selflessness. Even though God made a covenant with mankind using the rainbow, He never told anyone why He did this—why He established this covenant—meaning He never told anybody His real thoughts. This is because there is no one who can comprehend the depth of the love God has for the mankind He created with His own hands, and there is also no one who can appreciate just how much pain His heart suffered when He destroyed humanity. Therefore, even if He were to tell people how He felt, they would be unable to undertake this trust. Despite being in pain, He still continues with the next step of His work. God always gives His best side and the best things to mankind while quietly bearing all the suffering Himself. God never openly discloses these sufferings. Instead, He endures them and waits in silence. God's endurance is not cold, numb, or helpless, nor is it a sign of weakness. Rather, God's love and essence have always been selfless. This is a natural revelation of His essence and disposition, and a genuine embodiment of God's identity as the true Creator.

Having said that, some might misinterpret what I mean, and think, "Was describing God's feelings in such detail, with so much sensationalism, intended to make people feel sorry for God?" Is that the intention here? (No.) The only purpose of Me saying these things is to make you know God better, to understand His myriad aspects, understand His emotions, to appreciate that God's essence and disposition are, concretely and bit by bit, expressed through His work, as opposed to being depicted through man's empty words, their letters and doctrines, or their imaginations. That is to say, God and God's essence actually exist—they are not paintings, not imaginings, not constructed by man, and certainly not fabricated by man. Do you recognize this now? If you do recognize it, then My words today have achieved their goal.

We discussed three topics today. I trust that everyone has gained a lot from our fellowship on these three topics. I can say definitely that, through these three topics, the thoughts of God I described or the disposition and essence of God I mentioned have transformed people's imaginings and understanding of God, even transformed everyone's belief in God, and moreover, transformed the image of the God admired by everyone in their hearts. No matter what, I hope what you have learned about God's disposition in these two sections of the Bible is beneficial to you, and I hope after you return you will try to ponder it more. Today's meeting concludes here. Goodbye!

November 4, 2013

God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II

During our last meeting we fellowshiped about a very important topic. Do you remember what it was? Let Me repeat it. The topic of our last fellowship was: God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself. Is this an important topic to you? Which part of it is most important to you? God's work, God's disposition, or God Himself? Which one interests you most? Which part do you want to hear about most? I know it's difficult for you to answer that question, because God's disposition can be seen in every aspect of His work, and His disposition is revealed in His work always and in all places, and, in effect, represents God Himself; in God's overall management plan, God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself are all inseparable from each other.

The content of our last fellowship about God's work consisted of accounts from the Bible about events that occurred long ago. They were all stories about man and God, and they are about things that happened to man, while also involving the participation and expression of God, so these stories hold particular value and significance for knowing God. Just after He created mankind, God began to engage with man and talk to man, and His disposition began to be expressed to man. In other words, from when God first engaged with mankind He began to make public to man, without interruption, His essence and what He has and is. Regardless of whether earlier people or the people of today are able to see or understand it, God speaks to man and works among man, revealing His disposition and expressing His essence—this is a fact, and undeniable by any person. This also means that God's disposition, God's essence, and what He has and is are constantly issued forth and revealed as He works and engages with man. He has never concealed or hidden anything from man, but instead makes public and releases His own disposition without holding anything back. Thus, God hopes that man can know Him and understand His disposition and essence. He does not wish for man to treat His disposition and essence as eternal mysteries, nor does He want mankind to regard God as a puzzle that can never be solved. Only when mankind knows God can man know the way forward and accept God's guidance, and only a mankind such as this can truly live under the dominion of God, and live in the light, amid God's blessings.

The words and disposition issued forth and revealed by God represent His will, and they also represent His essence. When God engages with man, no matter what He says or does, or what disposition He reveals, and no matter what man sees of God's essence and what He has and is, they all represent God's will for man. Regardless of how much man is able to realize, comprehend or understand, it all represents God's will—God's will for man. This is beyond doubt! God's will for mankind is how He requires people to be, what He requires them to do, how He requires them to live, and how He requires them to be capable of accomplishing the fulfillment of God's will. Are these things inseparable from the essence of God? In other words, God issues forth

His disposition and all that He has and is at the same time as He makes demands of man. There is no falsehood, no pretense, no concealment, and no embellishment. Yet why is man incapable of knowing, and why has man never been able to clearly perceive the disposition of God? Why has man never realized God's will? That which is revealed and issued forth by God is what God Himself has and is; it is every shred and facet of His true disposition—so why can man not see? Why is man incapable of thorough knowledge? There is an important reason for this. So, what is this reason? Since the time of creation, man has never treated God as God. In the earliest times, no matter what God did with regard to man—man who had only just been created—man treated God as nothing more than a companion, as someone to be relied upon, and man had no knowledge or understanding of God. This is to say, man did not know that what was issued forth by this Being—this Being whom he relied upon and saw as his companion—was the essence of God, nor did he know that this Being was the One who rules over all things. Simply put, the people of that time did not recognize God at all. They did not know that the heavens and earth and all things had been made by Him, and they were ignorant of where He came from, and, moreover, of what He was. Of course, back then God did not require man to know or comprehend Him, or to understand all that He did, or to be knowledgeable about His will, for these were the earliest times following mankind's creation. When God began preparations for the work of the Age of Law, God did some things to man and also began making some demands of man, telling man how to give offerings to and worship God. Only then did man acquire a few simple ideas about God, and only then did he know the difference between man and God, and that God was the One who created mankind. When man knew that God was God and man was man, a certain distance came between him and God, yet still God did not ask that man have a great knowledge or deep understanding of Him. Thus, God makes different requirements of man based on the stages and circumstances of His work. What do you see in this? What aspect of God's disposition do you perceive? Is God real? Are God's requirements of man fitting? During the earliest times following God's creation of mankind, when God had yet to carry out the work of conquest and perfection on man, and had not spoken very many words to him, He asked little of man. Regardless of what man did and how he behaved—even if he did some things that offended God—God forgave and overlooked it all. This is because God knew what He had given man and what was within man, and thus He knew the standard of requirements that He should make of man. Even though the standard of His requirements was very low at that time, this does not mean that His disposition was not great, or that His wisdom and almightiness were but empty words. For man, there is only one way to know God's disposition and God Himself: by following the steps of the work of God's management and salvation of mankind, and accepting the words that God speaks to mankind. Once man knows what God has and is, and knows God's disposition, will he still ask God to show him His real person? No, man would not ask,

and would not even dare to ask, for having comprehended God's disposition and what He has and is, man will have already seen the true God Himself, and His real person. This is the inevitable outcome.

As God's work and plan ceaselessly progressed, and after God established the covenant of the rainbow with man, as a sign that He would never again destroy the world using floods, God had an increasingly pressing desire to gain those who could be of one mind with Him. So, too, did He have an ever more urgent wish to gain those who were able to do His will on earth, and, moreover, to gain a group of people able to break free from the forces of darkness and not be bound by Satan, a group that would be able to bear testimony to Him on earth. Gaining such a group of people was God's long-held wish, it was what He had been waiting for ever since the time of creation. Thus, regardless of God's use of floods to destroy the world, or of His covenant with man, God's will, frame of mind, plan, and hopes all remained the same. What He wanted to do, the thing that He had yearned for long before the time of creation, was to gain those among mankind whom He wished to gain—to gain a group of people able to comprehend and know His disposition and understand His will, a group who would be able to worship Him. Such a group of people truly would be able to bear testimony to Him, and it can be said that they would be His confidants.

Today, let us continue retracing the footsteps of God and following the steps of His work, so that we might uncover the thoughts and ideas of God, and all the various details that have to do with God, all of which have been "sealed shut" for a very long time. Through these things we will come to know the disposition of God, understand the essence of God, we will let God into our hearts, and every one of us will slowly come closer to God, reducing our distance from God.

Part of what we talked about last time related to why God established a covenant with man. This time, we will fellowship about the passages of scripture below. Let us begin by reading from the scriptures.

A. Abraham

1. God Promises to Give Abraham a Son

Gen 17:15–17 And God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give you a son also of her: yes, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

Gen 17:21–22 But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear to you at this set time in the next year. And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

No One Can Hinder the Work That God Resolves to Do

So, you have all just heard the story of Abraham, haven't you? He was chosen by

God after the flood destroyed the world, his name was Abraham, and when he was a hundred years old and his wife Sarah ninety, God's promise came to him. What promise did God make to him? God promised that which is referred to in the Scriptures: "And I will bless her, and give you a son also of her." What was the background to God's promise to give him a son? The Scriptures provide the following account: "Then Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" In other words, this aged couple was too old to bear children. And what did Abraham do after God made His promise to him? He fell on his face laughing, and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old?" Abraham believed that it was impossible—which meant that he believed God's promise to him was nothing more than a joke. From man's perspective, this is something unachievable by man, and likewise unachievable by and an impossibility for God. Perhaps, to Abraham, it was laughable: "God created man, yet He seems somehow unaware that someone so old is incapable of bearing children; God thinks He can allow me to bear a child, He says that He will give me a son—surely that is impossible!" So, Abraham fell on his face and laughed, thinking to himself: "Impossible—God is joking with me, this cannot be true!" He did not take God's words seriously. So, in God's eyes, what kind of a man was Abraham? (Righteous.) Where was it stated that he was a righteous man? You think that all those whom God calls upon are righteous and perfect, that they are all people who walk with God. You abide by doctrine! You must see clearly that when God defines someone, He does not do so arbitrarily. Here, God did not say that Abraham was righteous. In His heart, God has standards for measuring every person. Though God did not say what kind of person Abraham was, in terms of his conduct, what kind of faith did Abraham have in God? Was it a little abstract? Or was he of great faith? No, he was not! His laughter and thoughts showed who he was, so your belief that he was righteous is but a figment of your imagination, it is the blind application of doctrine, and it is an irresponsible appraisal. Did God see Abraham's laughter and his little expressions? Did He know of them? God knew. But would God alter what He had resolved to do? No! When God planned and resolved that He would choose this man, it was accomplished. Neither man's thoughts nor his conduct would in the slightest bit influence or interfere with God; God would not arbitrarily change His plan, nor would He impulsively change or upset His plan because of man's conduct, even conduct which might be ignorant. What, then, is written in Genesis 17:21-22? "But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear to you at this set time in the next year. And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham." God paid not the slightest attention to what Abraham thought or said. What was the reason for His disregard? It was because, at that time, God did not ask that man be of great faith, or that he be capable of great knowledge of God, or, moreover, that he be able to understand what was done and said by God. Thus, He did not ask that man fully understand what He resolved to do, or the people He determined to choose, or the

principles of His actions, for man's stature was simply inadequate. At that time, God regarded whatever Abraham did and however he conducted himself as normal. He did not condemn or reprimand, but merely said: "Sarah shall bear Isaac to you at this set time in the next year." To God, after He proclaimed these words, this matter came true step by step; in the eyes of God, that which was to be accomplished by His plan had already been achieved. After completing the arrangements for this, God departed. What man does or thinks, what man understands, the plans of man—none of this bears any relation to God. Everything proceeds according to God's plan, in keeping with the times and stages set by God. Such is the principle of God's work. God does not interfere in whatever man thinks or knows, yet neither does He forgo His plan or abandon His work just because man does not believe or understand. The facts are thus accomplished according to the plan and thoughts of God. This is precisely what we see in the Bible: God caused Isaac to be born at the time He had set. Do the facts prove that the behavior and conduct of man hindered the work of God? They did not hinder the work of God! Did man's little faith in God, and his notions and imaginings about God affect God's work? No, they did not! Not in the least! God's management plan is unaffected by any man, matter, or environment. All that He resolves to do will be completed and accomplished on time and according to His plan, and His work cannot be interfered with by any man. God ignores certain aspects of man's foolishness and ignorance, and even certain aspects of man's resistance and notions toward Him, and He does the work that He must do regardless. This is God's disposition, and it is a reflection of His omnipotence.

2. Abraham Offers Isaac

Gen 22:2–3 And He said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him.

Gen 22:9–10 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar on the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

The Work of God's Management and Salvation of Mankind Begins With Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac

Having given Abraham a son, the words that God had spoken to Abraham were fulfilled. This does not mean that God's plan stopped here; on the contrary, God's magnificent plan for the management and salvation of mankind had only just begun, and His blessing of a son to Abraham was but a prelude to His overall management plan. At that moment, who knew that God's battle with Satan had quietly begun in the moment when Abraham offered up Isaac?

God Does Not Care If Man Is Foolish—He Only Asks That Man Be True

Next, let us look at what God did to Abraham. In Genesis 22:2, God gave the following command to Abraham: "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you of." God's meaning was clear: He was telling Abraham to give his only son Isaac, whom he loved, as a burnt offering. Looking at it today, is God's command still at odds with man's notions? Yes! All that God did at that time is guite contrary to the notions of man; it is incomprehensible to man. In their notions, people believe the following: When a man did not believe, and thought it an impossibility, God gave him a son, and after he had gained a son, God asked him to sacrifice his son. Is this not utterly unbelievable! What did God actually intend to do? What was God's actual intention? He unconditionally gave Abraham a son, yet He also asked that Abraham make an unconditional offering. Was this excessive? From a third party's standpoint, this was not only excessive but also somewhat a case of "making trouble for no reason." But Abraham himself did not believe that God was asking too much. Though he had a few, small opinions of his own about it and though he was a little suspicious of God, he was still prepared to make the offering. At this point, what do you see that proves Abraham was willing to offer his son? What is being said in these sentences? The original text gives the following accounts: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him" (Gen 22:3). "And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar on the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son" (Gen 22:9–10). When Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son, were his actions seen by God? They were. The entire process—from the start, when God asked that Abraham sacrifice Isaac, to when Abraham actually raised his knife to slay his son—showed God the heart of Abraham, and regardless of his former foolishness, ignorance, and misunderstanding of God, at that time Abraham's heart for God was true, and honest, and he truly was going to return Isaac, the son given to him by God, back to God. In him, God saw obedience, the very obedience that He desired.

To man, God does much that is incomprehensible and even unbelievable. When God wishes to orchestrate someone, this orchestration is often at odds with man's notions and incomprehensible to him, yet it is precisely this dissonance and incomprehensibility that are God's trial and test of man. Abraham, meanwhile, was able to demonstrate obedience to God within himself, which was the most fundamental condition of his being able to satisfy God's requirement. Only then, when Abraham was able to obey God's requirement, when he offered up Isaac, did God truly feel

reassurance and approval toward mankind—toward Abraham, whom He had chosen. Only then was God sure that this person whom He had chosen was an indispensable leader who could undertake His promise and His subsequent management plan. Though it was but a trial and a test, God felt gratified, He felt man's love for Him, and He felt comforted by man as never before. At the moment that Abraham lifted up his knife to slay Isaac, did God stop him? God did not let Abraham sacrifice Isaac, for God simply had no intention of taking Isaac's life. Thus, God stopped Abraham just in time. For God, Abraham's obedience had already passed the test, what he did was sufficient, and God had already seen the outcome of what He intended to do. Was this outcome satisfactory to God? It can be said that this outcome was satisfactory to God, that it was what God wanted, and was what God had longed to see. Is this true? Although, in different contexts, God uses different ways of testing each person, in Abraham God saw what He wanted, He saw that Abraham's heart was true, and that his obedience was unconditional. It was precisely this "unconditional" that God desired. People often say, "I've already offered this, I've already forgone that—why is God still not satisfied with me? Why does He keep subjecting me to trials? Why does He keep testing me?" This demonstrates one fact: God has not seen your heart, and has not gained your heart. This is to say, He has not seen such sincerity as when Abraham was able to raise his knife to slay his son by his own hand and offer him to God. He has not seen your unconditional obedience, and has not been comforted by you. It is natural, then, that God keeps trying you. Is this not true? As far as this topic goes, we will leave it here. Next, we will read "God's Promise to Abraham."

3. God's Promise to Abraham

Gen 22:16–18 By Myself have I sworn, said Jehovah, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice.

This is an unabridged account of God's blessing to Abraham. Though brief, its content is rich: It includes the reason for, and background to, God's gift to Abraham, and what it was that He gave to Abraham. It is also imbued with the joy and excitement with which God uttered these words, as well as the urgency of His longing to gain those who are able to listen to His words. In this, we see God's cherishment of, and tenderness toward, those who obey His words and follow His commands. So, too, we see the price He pays to gain people, and the care and thought He puts into gaining them. Moreover, this passage, which contains the words "By Myself have I sworn," gives us a powerful sense of the bitterness and pain borne by God and God alone behind the scenes of this work of His management plan. It is a thought-provoking passage, and one that held

special significance for those who came after, and had a far-reaching impact upon them.

Man Gains God's Blessings Because of His Sincerity and Obedience

Was the blessing given to Abraham by God that we read of here great? Just how great was it? There is one key sentence here: "And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This sentence shows that Abraham received blessings not given to any who came before or after. When, as asked by God, Abraham returned his only son—his beloved only son—to God (here we cannot use the word "offered"; we should say he returned his son to God), not only did God not allow Abraham to offer Isaac, but He also blessed him. With what promise did He bless Abraham? He blessed him with the promise to multiply his offspring. And by how many were they to be multiplied? The Scriptures provide the following record: "as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." What was the context in which God uttered these words? That is to say, how did Abraham receive God's blessings? He received them just as God says in the Scriptures: "because you have obeyed My voice." That is, because Abraham had followed God's command, because he had done everything that God had said, asked and commanded, without the slightest complaint, thus God made such a promise to him. There is one crucial sentence in this promise that touches upon God's thoughts at the time. Have you seen it? You may not have paid much attention to God's words that "By Myself have I sworn." What they mean is that, when God uttered these words, He was swearing by Himself. What do people swear by when they make an oath? They swear by Heaven, which is to say, they make an oath to God and swear by God. People might not have much of an understanding of the phenomenon by which God swore by Himself, but you will be able to understand when I provide you with the correct explanation. Being faced with a man who could only hear His words but not understand His heart, once more God felt lonely and at a loss. In desperation—and, it can be said, subconsciously—God did something very natural: God put His hand on His heart and addressed Himself when bestowing this promise upon Abraham, and from this man heard God say "By Myself have I sworn." Through God's actions, you may think of yourself. When you put your hand on your heart and speak to yourself, do you have a clear idea of what you are saying? Is your attitude sincere? Do you speak candidly, with your heart? Thus, we see here that when God spoke to Abraham, He was earnest and sincere. At the same time as speaking to and blessing Abraham, God was also speaking to Himself. He was telling Himself: I will bless Abraham, and make his progeny as numerous as the stars of heaven and as plentiful as the sand on the sea shore, because he obeyed My words and he is the one I choose. When God said "By Myself have I sworn," God resolved that in Abraham He would produce the chosen people of Israel, after which He would lead these people forward apace with His work. That is, God would make Abraham's descendants bear the work

of God's management, and the work of God and that expressed by God would begin with Abraham and would continue in Abraham's descendants, thus realizing God's wish to save man. What say you, is this not a blessed thing? For man, there is no greater blessing than this; this, it can be said, is the most blessed thing. The blessing gained by Abraham was not the multiplication of his offspring, but God's achievement of His management, His commission, and His work in the descendants of Abraham. This means that the blessings gained by Abraham were not temporary, but continued on as God's management plan progressed. When God spoke, when God swore by Himself, He had already made a resolution. Was the process of this resolution true? Was it real? God resolved that, from that time onward, His efforts, the price He paid, what He has and is, His everything, and even His life, would be given to Abraham and the descendants of Abraham. So too did God resolve that, starting from this group of people, He would make manifest His deeds, and allow man to see His wisdom, authority, and power.

Gaining Those Who Know God and Are Able to Testify to Him Is God's Unchanging Wish

At the same time as speaking to Himself, God also spoke to Abraham, but apart from hearing the blessings that God gave to him, was Abraham able to understand God's true wishes in all of His words at that moment? He was not! So, at that moment, when God swore by Himself, His heart was still lonely and sorrowful. There was still not one person able to understand or comprehend what He intended and planned. At that moment, no one—including Abraham—was able to speak to Him in confidence, much less was anyone able to cooperate with Him in doing the work that He must do. On the surface, God had gained Abraham, someone who could obey His words. But in fact, this person's knowledge of God was barely more than nothing. Even though God had blessed Abraham, God's heart was still not satisfied. What does it mean that God was not satisfied? It means that His management had only just begun, it means that the people He wanted to gain, the people He longed to see, the people He loved, were still distant from Him; He needed time, He needed to wait, He needed to be patient. For at that time, apart from God Himself, there was no one who knew what He needed, or what He wished to gain, or what He longed for. So, at the same time that God was feeling very excited, God also felt heavy of heart. Yet He did not halt His steps, and He continued to plan the next step of what He must do.

What do you see in God's promise to Abraham? God bestowed great blessings upon Abraham simply because he obeyed God's words. Although, on the surface, this seems normal and a matter of course, in it we see God's heart: God especially treasures man's obedience to Him, and cherishes man's understanding of Him and sincerity toward Him. How much does God cherish this sincerity? You may not understand how much He cherishes it, and there may well be none who realize it. God

gave Abraham a son, and when that son had grown up, God asked Abraham to offer his son to God. Abraham followed God's command to the letter, he obeyed God's word, and his sincerity moved God and was treasured by God. How much did God treasure it? And why did He treasure it? At a time when no one comprehended God's words or understood His heart, Abraham did something that shook the heavens and made the earth tremble, and it made God feel an unprecedented sense of satisfaction, and brought God the joy of gaining someone who was able to obey His words. This satisfaction and joy came from a creature made by God's own hand, and was the first "sacrifice" that man had offered to God and that was most treasured by God, ever since man was created. God had had a hard time waiting for this sacrifice, and He treated it as the first most important gift from man, whom He had created. It showed God the first fruit of His efforts and of the price He had paid, and it allowed Him to see the hope in mankind. Afterward, God had an even greater yearning for a group of such people to keep Him company, to treat Him with sincerity, and to care for Him with sincerity. God even hoped that Abraham would live on, for He wished to have a heart such as Abraham's accompany Him and be with Him as He continued in His management. No matter what God wanted, it was just a wish, just an idea—for Abraham was merely a man who was able to obey Him, and did not have the slightest understanding or knowledge of God. Abraham was someone who fell far short of the standards of God's requirements for man, which are: knowing God, being able to testify to God, and being of one mind with God. So, Abraham could not walk with God. In Abraham's offering of Isaac, God saw the sincerity and obedience of Abraham, and saw that he had withstood God's test of him. Even though God accepted his sincerity and obedience, he was still unworthy of becoming God's confidant, of becoming someone who knew and understood God, and someone who was knowledgeable about God's disposition; he was far from being of one mind with God and doing God's will. So, in His heart, God was still lonely and anxious. The more lonely and anxious God became, the more He needed to continue with His management as soon as possible, and be able to select and gain a group of people to accomplish His management plan and achieve His will as soon as possible. This was God's eager desire, and it has remained unchanged from the very beginning until today. Ever since He created man in the beginning, God has yearned for a group of overcomers, a group that will walk with Him and are able to understand, know and comprehend His disposition. This wish of God has never changed. Regardless of how long He still has to wait, regardless of how hard the road ahead may be, and no matter how far off the objectives He yearns for may be, God has never altered or given up on His expectations for man. Now that I have said this, do you realize something of God's wish? Perhaps what you have realized is not very profound—but it will come gradually!

During the same period when Abraham lived, God also destroyed a city. This city was called Sodom. No doubt, many people are familiar with the story of Sodom, but none

are acquainted with the thoughts of God that formed the background to His destruction of the city.

So today, through God's exchanges with Abraham below, we will learn of His thoughts at that time, while also learning of His disposition. Next, let us read the following passages of scripture.

B. God Must Destroy Sodom

Gen 18:26 And Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

Gen 18:29 And he spoke to Him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do it.

Gen 18:30 And he said to Him, Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it.

Gen 18:31 And he said, Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it.

Gen 18:32 And he said, Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it.

These are a few excerpts I have chosen from the Bible. They are not the complete, original versions. If you wish to see those, you can look them up in the Bible yourselves; to save time, I have omitted part of the original content. Here I have only selected several key passages and sentences, leaving out several sentences that have no bearing on our fellowship today. In all the passages and content we fellowship about, our focus skips over the details of the stories and man's conduct in the stories; instead, we only speak of what God's thoughts and ideas were at the time. In God's thoughts and ideas, we will see the disposition of God, and from everything God did, we will see the true God Himself—in this, we will achieve our objective.

God Only Cares About Those Who Are Able to Obey His Words and Follow His Commands

The passages above contain several key words: the numbers. First, Jehovah said that if He found fifty righteous within the city, then He would spare all the place, which is to say, He would not destroy the city. So were there, in fact, fifty righteous within Sodom? There were not. Soon after, what did Abraham say to God? He said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there? And God said, I will not do it. Next, Abraham said, Peradventure there shall thirty be found there? And God said, I will not do it. And peradventure twenty? I will not do it. Ten? I will not do it. Were there, in fact, ten righteous within the city? There were not ten—but there was one. And who was this one? It was Lot. At the time, there was but one righteous person in Sodom, but was God very stringent or exacting when it came to this number? No, He was not! And so when man kept asking, "What about forty?" "What about thirty?" until he got to "What about ten?"

God said, "Even if there were only ten, I would not destroy the city; I would spare it, and forgive the other people besides these ten." If there were only ten, that would have been pitiful enough, but it turned out that, in fact, there was not even that number of righteous people in Sodom. You see, then, that in the eyes of God, the sin and evil of the city's people were such that God had no choice but to destroy them. What did God mean when He said that He would not destroy the city if there were fifty righteous? These numbers were not important to God. What was important was whether or not the city contained the righteous that He wanted. If the city had but one righteous person, God would not allow them to come to harm due to His destruction of the city. What this means is that, regardless of whether or not God was going to destroy the city, and regardless of how many righteous were within it, to God this sinful city was cursed and execrable, and should be destroyed, should vanish from the eyes of God, while the righteous should remain. Regardless of the era, regardless of the stage of mankind's development, the attitude of God does not change: He hates evil, and cares about those who are righteous in His eyes. This clear attitude of God is also the true revelation of the essence of God. Because there was but one righteous person within the city, God hesitated no longer. The end result was that Sodom would inevitably be destroyed. What do you see in this? In that age, God would not destroy a city if there were fifty righteous within it, nor if there were ten, which means that God would decide to forgive and be tolerant toward mankind, or would do the work of guidance, because of a few people who were able to revere and worship Him. God places great stock in man's righteous deeds, He places great stock in those who are able to worship Him, and He places great stock in those who are able to do good deeds before Him.

From the earliest times until today, have you ever read in the Bible of God communicating the truth, or speaking about the way of God, to any person? No, never. The words of God to man that we read of only told people what to do. Some went and did it, some did not; some believed, and some did not. That's all there was. Thus, the righteous of that age—those who were righteous in the eyes of God—were merely those who could hear God's words and follow God's commands. They were servants who carried out God's words among man. Could such people be called those who know God? Could they be called people who were made perfect by God? No, they could not. So, regardless of their number, in the eyes of God were these righteous people worthy of being called the confidants of God? Could they be called God's witnesses? Certainly not! They were certainly not worthy of being called God's confidants and witnesses. So, what did God call such people? In the Old Testament of the Bible, there are many instances of God calling them "My servant." That is to say, at that time, in the eyes of God these righteous people were the servants of God, they were the people who served Him on earth. And how did God think of this appellation? Why did He call them so? Does God have standards in His heart for the appellations by which He calls people? He certainly does. God has standards, regardless of whether He calls people righteous,

perfect, upright, or servants. When He calls someone His servant, He is of the firm belief that this person is able to receive His messengers, able to follow His commands, and able to carry out that which is commanded by the messengers. What does this person carry out? They carry out that which God commands man to do and carry out on earth. At that time, could that which God asked man to do and carry out on earth be called the way of God? No, it could not. For at that time, God asked only that man do a few simple things; He uttered a few simple commands, telling man to only do this or that, and nothing more. God was working according to His plan. Because, at that time, many conditions were not yet present, the time was not yet ripe, and it was difficult for mankind to bear the way of God, thus the way of God had yet to begin to be issued forth from God's heart. God saw the righteous people He spoke of, whom we see here—whether thirty or twenty—as His servants. When the messengers of God came upon these servants, they would be able to receive them, and follow their commands, and act according to their words. This was precisely what should be done, and attained, by those who were servants in God's eyes. God is judicious in His appellations for people. He did not call them His servants because they were as you are now—because they had heard much preaching, knew what God was to do, understood much of God's will, and comprehended His management plan—but because they were honest in their humanity and they were able to comply with God's words; when God commanded them, they were able to put aside what they were doing and carry out that which God had commanded. So for God, the other layer of meaning in the title of servant is that they cooperated with His work on earth, and although they were not the messengers of God, they were the executors and implementers of God's words on earth. You see, then, that these servants or righteous people carried great weight in the heart of God. The work that God was to embark upon on earth could not be without people to cooperate with Him, and the role undertaken by the servants of God was irreplaceable by the messengers of God. Each task that God commanded unto these servants was of great importance to Him, and so He could not lose them. Without these servants' cooperation with God, His work among mankind would have come to a standstill, as a result of which God's management plan and God's hopes would have come to naught.

God Is Abundantly Merciful Toward Those Whom He Cares About, and Profoundly Wrathful Toward Those Whom He Detests and Rejects

In the accounts of the Bible, were there ten servants of God in Sodom? No, there were not! Was the city worthy of being spared by God? Only one person in the city—Lot—received God's messengers. The implication of this is that there was only one servant of God in the city, and thus God had no choice but to save Lot and destroy the city of Sodom. The exchanges between Abraham and God quoted above may seem simple, but they illustrate something very profound: There are principles to God's actions, and prior to making a decision He will spend a long time observing and

deliberating; He will definitely not make any decisions or jump to any conclusions before the time is right. The exchanges between Abraham and God show us that God's decision to destroy Sodom was not in the slightest bit wrong, for God already knew that in the city there were not forty righteous, nor thirty righteous, nor twenty. There were not even ten. The only righteous person in the city was Lot. All that happened in Sodom and its circumstances were observed by God, and were as familiar to God as the back of His own hand. Thus, His decision could not be wrong. In contrast, compared to the almightiness of God, man is so numb, so foolish and ignorant, so short-sighted. This is what we see in the exchanges between Abraham and God. God has been issuing forth His disposition from the beginning until today. Here, likewise, there is also the disposition of God that we should see. Numbers are simple—they do not demonstrate anything but here there is a very important expression of God's disposition. God would not destroy the city because of fifty righteous. Is this due to the mercy of God? Is it because of His love and tolerance? Have you seen this side of God's disposition? Even if there were only ten righteous, God would not have destroyed the city, because of these ten righteous people. Is this or is this not the tolerance and love of God? Because of God's mercy, tolerance, and concern toward those righteous people, He would not have destroyed the city. This is the tolerance of God. And in the end, what outcome do we see? When Abraham said, "Peradventure ten shall be found there," God said, "I will not destroy it." After that, Abraham said no more—for within Sodom there were not the ten righteous he referred to, and he had no more to say, and at that time he understood why God had resolved to destroy Sodom. In this, what disposition of God do you see? What kind of resolution did God make? God resolved that, if this city had not ten righteous, He would not permit its existence, and would inevitably destroy it. Is this not the wrath of God? Does this wrath represent God's disposition? Is this disposition the revelation of God's holy essence? Is it the revelation of God's righteous essence, which man must not offend? Having confirmed that there were not ten righteous in Sodom, God was certain to destroy the city, and would severely punish the people within that city, for they opposed God, and because they were so filthy and corrupt.

Why have we analyzed these passages in this way? It is because these few simple sentences give full expression to God's disposition of abundant mercy and profound wrath. At the same time as treasuring the righteous, and having mercy upon, tolerating, and caring about them, in God's heart there was a deep loathing for all those in Sodom who had been corrupted. Was this, or was it not, abundant mercy and profound wrath? By what means did God destroy the city? By fire. And why did He destroy it using fire? When you see something being burned by fire, or when you are about to burn something, what are your feelings toward it? Why do you want to burn it? Do you feel that you no longer need it, that you no longer wish to look at it? Do you want to abandon it? God's use of fire means abandonment, and hate, and that He no longer wished to see Sodom. This was the emotion that made God raze Sodom with fire. The use of fire represents

just how angry God was. The mercy and tolerance of God do indeed exist, but God's holiness and righteousness when He unleashes His wrath also show man the side of God that brooks no offense. When man is fully capable of obeying the commands of God and acts in accordance with God's requirements, God is abundant in His mercy toward man; when man has been filled with corruption, hatred and enmity for Him, God is profoundly angry. To what extent is He profoundly angry? His wrath will last until God no longer sees man's resistance and evil deeds, until they are no longer before His eyes. Only then will God's anger disappear. In other words, no matter who the person is, if their heart has become distant from God and turned away from God, never to return, then regardless of how, to all appearances or in terms of their subjective desires, they wish to worship and follow and obey God in their body or in their thinking, God's wrath will be unleashed without cease. It will be such that when God deeply unleashes His anger, having given man ample opportunities, once it is unleashed there will be no way of taking it back, and He will never again be merciful and tolerant of such a mankind. This is one side of God's disposition that tolerates no offense. Here, it seems normal to people that God would destroy a city, for, in God's eyes, a city full of sin could not exist and continue to remain, and it was rational that it should be destroyed by God. Yet in that which happened prior to and following His destruction of Sodom, we see the entirety of God's disposition. He is tolerant and merciful toward things that are kind and beautiful and good; toward things that are evil, sinful, and wicked, He is profoundly wrathful, such that He is unceasing in His wrath. These are the two principal and most prominent aspects of God's disposition, and, moreover, they have been revealed by God from beginning to end: abundant mercy and profound wrath. Most of you have experienced something of God's mercy, but very few of you have appreciated God's wrath. God's mercy and lovingkindness can be seen in every person; that is, God has been abundantly merciful toward every person. Yet very rarely—or, it can be said, never—has God been profoundly angry toward any individuals or any section of the people among you. Relax! Sooner or later, God's wrath will be seen and experienced by every person, but now is not yet the time. Why is this? It is because when God is constantly angry toward someone, that is, when He unleashes His profound wrath upon them, this means that He has long since detested and rejected this person, that He despises their existence, and that He cannot endure their existence; as soon as His anger comes upon them, they will disappear. Today, God's work has yet to reach that point. None of you will be able to bear it once God becomes profoundly angry. You see, then, that at this time God is only abundantly merciful toward you all, and you have yet to see His profound anger. If there are people who remain unconvinced, you can ask that God's wrath come upon you, so that you may experience whether or not God's anger and His disposition which brooks no offense by man really exist. Do you dare?

The People of the Last Days Only See God's Wrath in His Words, and Do Not Truly Experience the Wrath of God

Are the two sides of God's disposition that are seen in these passages of scripture worthy of fellowship? Having heard this story, do you have a renewed understanding of God? What kind of understanding do you have? It can be said that from the time of creation until today, no group has enjoyed as much of God's grace or mercy and lovingkindness as this final group. Although, in the final stage, God has done the work of judgment and chastisement, and has done His work with majesty and wrath, most of the time God only uses words to accomplish His work; He uses words to teach and water, to provide and feed. God's wrath, meanwhile, has always been kept hidden, and apart from experiencing God's wrathful disposition in His words, very few people have experienced His anger in person. This is to say, during God's work of judgment and chastisement, although the wrath revealed in God's words allows people to experience God's majesty and His intolerance of offense, this wrath does not go beyond His words. In other words, God uses words to rebuke man, expose man, judge man, chastise man, and even condemn man—but God has yet to be profoundly angry toward man, and has barely even unleashed His wrath upon man except with His words. Thus, the mercy and lovingkindness of God experienced by man in this age are the revelation of God's true disposition, while the wrath of God experienced by man is merely the effect of the tone and feel of His utterances. Many people wrongly take this effect to be the true experiencing and the true knowledge of God's wrath. Consequently, most people believe that they have seen God's mercy and lovingkindness in His words, that they have also beheld God's intolerance of man's offense, and most of them have even come to appreciate God's mercy and tolerance toward man. But no matter how bad man's behavior, or how corrupt his disposition, God has always endured. In enduring, His aim is to wait for the words He has spoken, the efforts He has made and the price He has paid to achieve an effect in those whom He wishes to gain. Waiting for an outcome such as this takes time, and requires the creation of different environments for man, in the same way that people do not become adults as soon as they are born; it takes eighteen or nineteen years, and some people even need twenty or thirty years before they mature into a real adult. God awaits the completion of this process, He awaits the coming of such a time, and He awaits the arrival of this outcome. Throughout the time that He waits, God is abundantly merciful. During the period of God's work, however, an extremely small number of people are struck down, and some are punished because of their grave opposition to God. Such examples are even greater proof of the disposition of God that does not brook the offense of man, and fully confirm the real existence of God's tolerance and endurance toward the chosen ones. Of course, in these typical examples, the revelation of part of the disposition of God in these people does not affect God's overall management plan. In fact, in this final stage of God's work, God has

endured throughout the period He has been waiting, and He has exchanged His endurance and His life for the salvation of those who follow Him. Do you see this? God does not upset His plan without reason. He can unleash His wrath, and He can also be merciful; this is the revelation of the two main parts of God's disposition. Is this, or is it not, very clear? In other words, when it comes to God, right and wrong, just and unjust, the positive and the negative—all this is clearly shown to man. What He will do, what He likes, what He hates—all this can be directly reflected in His disposition. Such things can also be very obviously and clearly seen in God's work, and they are not vague or general; instead, they allow all people to behold the disposition of God and what He has and is in an especially concrete, true and practical manner. This is the true God Himself.

God's Disposition Has Never Been Hidden From Man—Man's Heart Has Strayed From God

If I did not fellowship about these things, none of you would be able to behold the true disposition of God in the stories of the Bible. This is fact. That is because, though these biblical stories recorded some of the things that God did, God spoke but a few words, and did not directly introduce His disposition or openly issue forth His will to man. Later generations have regarded these records as nothing more than stories, and so it appears to people that God hides Himself from man, that it is not God's person that is hidden from man, but His disposition and will. After My fellowship today, do you still feel that God is fully hidden from man? Do you still believe that God's disposition is hidden from man?

Since the time of creation, God's disposition has been in step with His work. It has never been hidden from man, but fully publicized and made plain to man. Yet, with the passing of time, man's heart has grown ever more distant from God, and as man's corruption has become deeper, man and God have become further and further apart. Slowly but surely, man has disappeared from the eyes of God. Man has become unable to "see" God, which has left him without any "news" of God; thus, he does not know whether God exists, and even goes so far as to completely deny the existence of God. Consequently, man's incomprehension of God's disposition, and what He has and is, is not because God is hidden from man, but because his heart has turned away from God. Though man believes in God, man's heart is without God, and he is ignorant of how to love God, nor does he want to love God, for his heart never draws close to God and he always avoids God. As a result, man's heart is distant from God. So, where is his heart? In fact, man's heart has not gone anywhere: Instead of giving it to God or revealing it to God to see, he has kept it for himself. This is despite the fact that some people often pray to God and say, "O God, look upon my heart—You know all that I think," and some even swear to let God look upon them, that they may be punished if they break their oath. Though man allows God to look within his heart, this does not mean that man is capable of obeying the orchestrations and arrangements of God, nor

that he has left his fate and prospects and his all under the control of God. Thus, regardless of the oaths you make to God or what you declare to Him, in God's eyes your heart is still closed to Him, for you only allow God to look upon your heart but do not permit Him to control it. In other words, you have not given your heart to God at all, and only speak nice-sounding words for God to hear; meanwhile, you hide your various deceitful intentions from God, together with your intrigues, scheming, and plans, and you clutch your prospects and fate in your hands, deeply afraid that they will be taken away by God. Thus, God never beholds man's sincerity toward Him. Though God does observe the depths of man's heart, and can see what man is thinking and wishes to do in his heart, and can see what things are kept within his heart, man's heart does not belong to God, and he has not given it over to God's control. This is to say, God has the right to observe, but He does not have the right to control. In the subjective consciousness of man, man does not want or intend to give himself over to God's arrangements. Not only has man closed himself off to God, but there are even people who think of ways to wrap up their hearts, using smooth talk and flattery to create a false impression and gain the trust of God, and concealing their true face out of sight from God. Their aim in not allowing God to see is to not allow God to perceive what they really are like. They do not want to give their hearts to God, but to keep them for themselves. The subtext of this is that what man does and what he wants is all planned, calculated, and decided by man himself; he does not require the participation or intervention of God, much less does he need the orchestrations and arrangements of God. Thus, whether in regard to the commands of God, His commission, or the requirements that God makes of man, man's decisions are based on his own intentions and interests, on his own state and circumstances at the time. Man always uses the knowledge and insights that he is familiar with, and his own intellect, to judge and select the path he should take, and does not allow the interference or control of God. This is the heart of man that God sees.

From the beginning until today, only man has been capable of conversing with God. That is, among all living things and creatures of God, none but man has been able to converse with God. Man has ears that enable him to hear, and eyes that let him see; he has language, and his own ideas, and free will. He is possessed of all that is required to hear God speak, and understand God's will, and accept God's commission, and so God confers all His wishes upon man, wanting to make man a companion who is of the same mind with Him and who can walk with Him. Since He began to manage, God has been waiting for man to give his heart to Him, to let God purify and equip it, to make him satisfactory to God and loved by God, to make him revere God and shun evil. God has ever looked forward to and awaited this outcome. Are there any such people among the records of the Bible? That is, are there any in the Bible capable of giving their hearts to God? Is there any precedent before this age? Today, let us continue reading the accounts of the Bible and take a look at whether what was done by this

figure—Job—has any connection to the topic of "giving your heart to God" that we are talking about today. Let us see whether Job was satisfactory to God and loved by God.

What is your impression of Job? Citing original scripture, some people say that Job feared God and eschewed evil. "Feared God, and eschewed evil": such is God's assessment of Job. If you used your own words, how would you pin down Job? Some people say that Job was a good and reasonable man; some say that he had true faith in God; some say that Job was a righteous and humane man. You have seen the faith of Job, which is to say, in your hearts you attach great importance to and are envious of Job's faith. Today, then, let us look at what was possessed by Job that God is pleased with him so. Next, let us read the scriptures below.

C. Job

1. Assessments of Job by God and in the Bible

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

Job 1:5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Job 1:8 And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil?

What is the key point that you see in these passages? These three brief passages of scripture all relate to Job. Though short, they clearly state what kind of person he was. Through their description of Job's everyday behavior and his conduct, they tell everyone that, rather than being groundless, God's assessment of Job was well-founded. They tell us that, whether it be man's appraisal of Job (Job 1:1), or God's appraisal of him (Job 1:8), both are the result of Job's deeds before God and man (Job 1:5).

First, let us read the first passage: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." This is the first assessment of Job in the Bible, and this sentence is the author's appraisal of Job. Naturally, it also represents man's assessment of Job, which is "that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Next, let us read of God's assessment of Job: "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil." Of the two, one came from man, and one originated from God; they are two assessments with the same content. It can be seen, then, that Job's behavior and conduct were known to man, and were also praised by God. In other words, Job's conduct before man and his conduct before God were the same; he laid his behavior and motivation before God at all times, so that they might be observed by God, and he was one that feared God and shunned evil. Thus, in

the eyes of God, of the people on earth only Job was perfect and upright, one that feared God and shunned evil.

Specific Manifestations of Job's Fear of God and Shunning of Evil in His Daily Life

Next, let us look at specific manifestations of Job's fear of God and shunning of evil. In addition to the passages that precede and follow it, let us also read Job 1:5, which is one of the specific manifestations of Job's fear of God and shunning of evil. It relates to how he feared God and shunned evil in his daily life; most prominently, he not only did as he ought to do for the sake of his own fear of God and shunning of evil, but also regularly sacrificed burnt offerings before God on behalf of his sons. He was afraid that they had often "sinned, and cursed God in their hearts" while feasting. How was this fear manifested in Job? The original text gives the following account: "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all." Job's conduct shows us that, rather than being manifested in his outward behavior, his fear of God came from within his heart, and that his fear of God could be found in every aspect of his daily life, at all times, for he not only shunned evil himself, but often sacrificed burnt offerings on behalf of his sons. In other words, Job was not only deeply afraid of sinning against God and renouncing God in his own heart, but also worried that his sons might sin against God and renounce Him in their hearts. From this it can be seen that the truth of Job's fear of God stands up to scrutiny, and is beyond the doubt of any man. Did he do thus occasionally, or frequently? The final sentence of the text is "Thus did Job continually." The meaning of these words is that Job did not go and look in on his sons occasionally, or when it pleased him, nor did he confess to God through prayer. Instead, he regularly sent his sons to be sanctified, and sacrificed burnt offerings for them. The word "continually" here does not mean he did so for one or two days, or for a moment. It is saying that the manifestation of Job's fear of God was not temporary, and did not stop at knowledge or spoken words; instead, the way of fearing God and shunning evil guided his heart, it dictated his behavior, and it was, in his heart, the root of his existence. That he did so continually shows that, in his heart, he often feared that he himself would sin against God and was also afraid that his sons and daughters would sin against God. It represents just how much weight the way of fearing God and shunning evil carried within his heart. He did thus continually because, in his heart, he was frightened and afraid—afraid that he had committed evil and sinned against God, and that he had deviated from the way of God and so was unable to satisfy God. At the same time, he also worried about his sons and daughters, fearing that they had offended God. Thus was Job's normal conduct in his everyday life. It is precisely this normal conduct which proves that Job's fear of God and shunning of evil are not empty words, that Job truly lived out such a reality. "Thus did Job continually": These words tell us of Job's everyday deeds before God. When he did thus continually, did his behavior and his heart reach before God? In other words, was God often pleased with his heart and his behavior? Then, in what state, and in what context, did Job do thus continually? Some people say: "It was because God frequently appeared to Job that he acted so." Some say: "He did thus continually because he had the will to shun evil." And some say: "Perhaps he thought that his fortune had not come easily, and he knew that it had been bestowed upon him by God, and so he was deeply afraid of losing his property as a result of sinning against or offending God." Are any of these claims true? Clearly not. For, in the eyes of God, what God accepted and cherished most about Job was not just that he did thus continually; more than that, it was his conduct before God, man, and Satan when he was handed over to Satan and tempted. The sections below offer the most convincing evidence, evidence which shows us the truth of God's assessment of Job. Next, let us read the following passages of scripture.

2. Satan Tempts Job for the First Time (His Livestock Is Stolen and Calamity Befalls His Children)

a. The Words Spoken by God

Job 1:8 And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Job 1:12 And Jehovah said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only on himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah.

b. Satan's Reply

Job 1:9–11 Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.

God Permits Satan to Tempt Job so That Job's Faith Will Be Made Perfect

Job 1:8 is the first record that we see in the Bible of an exchange between Jehovah God and Satan. So, what did God say? The original text provides the following account: "And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil?" This was God's assessment of Job before Satan; God said that he was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and shunned evil. Prior to these words between God and Satan, God had resolved that He would use Satan to tempt Job—that He would hand Job over to Satan. In one respect, this would prove that God's observation and evaluation of Job were accurate and without error, and would cause Satan to be shamed through Job's testimony; in another, it would make perfect Job's faith in God and fear of God. Thus, when Satan came before God, God did not equivocate. He cut straight to the

point and asked Satan: "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil?" In God's question there is the following meaning: God knew that Satan had roamed all places and had often spied upon Job, who was God's servant. It had often tempted and attacked Job, trying to find a way of bringing ruin upon him in order to prove that his faith in God and fear of God could not hold firm. Satan also readily sought opportunities to devastate Job, that Job might renounce God, and that it might seize him from the hands of God. Yet God looked within Job's heart and saw that he was perfect and upright, and that he feared God and shunned evil. God used a question to tell Satan that Job was a perfect and an upright man who feared God and shunned evil, that Job would never renounce God and follow Satan. Having heard God's appraisal of Job, in Satan there came a rage born of humiliation, and Satan became more angry and more impatient to snatch Job away, for Satan had never believed that someone could be perfect and upright, or that they could fear God and shun evil. At the same time, Satan also loathed the perfection and uprightness in man, and hated people that could fear God and shun evil. So it is written in Job 1:9–11 that "Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face." God was intimately acquainted with Satan's malicious nature, and knew full well that Satan had long planned to bring ruin upon Job, and so in this God wished, through telling Satan once more that Job was perfect and upright and that he feared God and shunned evil, to bring Satan into line, to make Satan reveal its true face and attack and tempt Job. In other words, God deliberately emphasized that Job was perfect and upright, and that he feared God and shunned evil, and by this means He made Satan attack Job because of Satan's hatred and ire toward how Job was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and shunned evil. As a result, God would bring shame upon Satan through the fact that Job was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and shunned evil, and Satan would be left utterly humiliated and defeated. After that, Satan would no longer doubt or make accusations about Job's perfection, uprightness, fear of God, or shunning of evil. In this way, God's trial and Satan's temptation was almost inevitable. The only one able to withstand God's trial and Satan's temptation was Job. Following this exchange, Satan was granted permission to tempt Job. Thus began Satan's first round of attacks. The target of these attacks was Job's property, for Satan had made the following accusation against Job: "Does Job fear God for nothing? ... You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." As a result, God permitted Satan to take all that Job had—this was the very purpose why God talked with Satan. Nevertheless, God made one demand of Satan: "All that he has is in your power; only on himself put not forth your hand" (Job 1:12). This was the condition that God made after He permitted Satan to

tempt Job and placed Job into the hands of Satan, and this was the limit He set for Satan: He ordered Satan not to harm Job. Because God recognized that Job was perfect and upright, and because He had faith that Job's perfection and uprightness before Him were beyond doubt and could withstand being put to the test, so God allowed Satan to tempt Job, but imposed a restriction on Satan: Satan was permitted to take all of Job's property, but it could not lay a finger on him. What does this mean? It means that God did not give Job completely to Satan at that moment. Satan could tempt Job by whatever means it wanted, but it could not hurt Job himself—not even one hair on his head—because everything of man is controlled by God, and because whether man lives or dies is decided by God. Satan does not have this license. After God said these words to Satan, Satan could not wait to begin. It used every means to tempt Job, and before long Job had lost a mountain's worth of sheep and oxen and all of the property given unto him by God.... Thus God's trials came to him.

Though the Bible tells us of the origins of Job's temptation, was Job himself, the one subjected to these temptations, aware of what was going on? Job was just a mortal man; of course he knew nothing of the story unfolding around him. Nevertheless, his fear of God and his perfection and uprightness made him realize that the trials of God had come upon him. He did not know what had occurred in the spiritual realm, nor what the intentions of God were behind these trials. But he did know that regardless of what happened to him, he should hold true to his perfection and uprightness, and should abide by the way of fearing God and shunning evil. Job's attitude and reaction to these matters were clearly beheld by God. What did God see? He saw Job's God-fearing heart, because from the beginning right through until when Job was tried, Job's heart remained open to God, it was laid before God, and Job did not renounce his perfection or uprightness, nor did he cast away or turn from the way of fearing God and shunning evil—nothing was more gratifying to God than this. Next, we will look at what temptations Job underwent, and how he dealt with these trials. Let us read from the scriptures.

c. Job's Reaction

Job 1:20–21 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah.

That Job Takes It Upon Himself to Return All That He Possesses Stems From His Fear of God

After God said to Satan, "All that he has is in your power; only on himself put not forth your hand," Satan departed, soon after which Job came under sudden and fierce attacks: First, his oxen and donkeys were plundered and some of his servants killed; next, his sheep and some more servants were consumed in fire; after that, his camels were taken and even more of his servants were murdered; finally, his sons' and

daughters' lives were taken away. This string of attacks was the torment suffered by Job during the first temptation. As commanded by God, during these attacks Satan only targeted Job's property and his children, and did not harm Job himself. Nevertheless, Job was instantly transformed from a rich man possessed of great wealth to someone who had nothing. No one could have withstood this astonishing surprise blow or properly reacted to it, yet Job demonstrated his extraordinary side. The Scriptures provide the following account: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground, and worshipped." This was Job's first reaction after hearing that he had lost his children and all of his property. Above all, he did not appear surprised, or panic-stricken, much less did he express anger or hate. You see, then, that in his heart he had already recognized that these disasters were not an accident, or born from the hand of man, much less were they the arrival of retribution or punishment. Instead, the trials of Jehovah had come upon him; it was Jehovah who wished to take his property and children. Job was very calm and clear-headed then. His perfect and upright humanity enabled him to rationally and naturally make accurate judgments and decisions about the disasters that had befallen him, and in consequence, he behaved with unusual calm: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground, and worshipped." "Rent his mantle" means that he was unclothed, and possessed of nothing; "shaved his head" means he had returned before God as a newborn infant; "fell down on the ground, and worshipped" means he had come into the world naked, and still without anything today, he was returned to God as if a newborn baby. Job's attitude toward all that befell him could not have been achieved by any creature of God. His faith in Jehovah went beyond the realm of belief; this was his fear of God, his obedience to God; he was not only able to give thanks to God for giving to him, but also for taking from him. Furthermore, he was able to take it upon himself to return to God all that he owned, including his life.

Job's fear and obedience toward God is an example to mankind, and his perfection and uprightness were the peak of the humanity that ought to be possessed by man. Though he did not see God, he realized that God truly existed, and because of this realization he feared God, and due to his fear of God, he was able to obey God. He gave God free rein to take whatever he had, yet he was without complaint, and fell down before God and told Him that, at this very moment, even if God took his flesh, he would gladly allow Him to do so, without complaint. His entire conduct was due to his perfect and upright humanity. This is to say, as a result of his innocence, honesty, and kindness, Job was unwavering in his realization and experience of God's existence. Upon this foundation he made demands of himself and standardized his thinking, behavior, conduct and principles of actions before God in accordance with God's guidance of him and the deeds of God that he had seen among all things. Over time, his experiences caused in him a real and actual fear of God and made him shun evil. This was the source of the integrity to which Job held firm. Job was possessed of an honest, innocent, and

kind humanity, and he had actual experience of fearing God, obeying God, and shunning evil, as well as the knowledge that "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away." Only because of these things was he able to stand firm in his testimony amid such vicious attacks by Satan, and only because of them was he able to not disappoint God and to provide a satisfactory answer to God when God's trials came upon him. Though Job's conduct during the first temptation was very straightforward, later generations were not assured of achieving such straightforwardness even after a lifetime of efforts, nor would they necessarily possess the conduct of Job described above. Today, faced with Job's straightforward conduct, and in comparing it to the cries and determination of "absolute obedience and loyalty unto death" shown to God by those who claim to believe in God and follow God, do you, or do you not, feel deeply ashamed?

When you read in the scriptures of all that was suffered by Job and his family, what is your reaction? Do you become lost in your thoughts? Are you astonished? Could the trials that befell Job be described as "horrifying"? In other words, it is appalling enough reading of Job's trials as described in the scriptures, to say nothing of how they would have been in real life. You see, then, that what befell Job was not a "practice drill," but a real "battle," featuring real "guns" and "bullets." But by whose hand was he subjected to these trials? They were, of course, the work of Satan, and Satan did these things with its own hands. Despite this, these things were authorized by God. Did God tell Satan by what means to tempt Job? He did not. God merely made one condition by which Satan must abide, and then the temptation came upon Job. When the temptation came upon Job, it gave people a sense of the evil and ugliness of Satan, of its maliciousness and loathing for man, and of its enmity to God. In this we see that words cannot describe just how cruel this temptation was. It can be said that the malicious nature with which Satan abused man, and its ugly face, were fully revealed at this moment. Satan used this opportunity, the opportunity provided by God's permission, to subject Job to feverish and remorseless abuse, the method and level of cruelty of which are both unimaginable and completely intolerable to people today. Rather than saying that Job was tempted by Satan, and that he stood firm in his testimony during this temptation, it is better to say that in the trials set for him by God, Job embarked upon a contest with Satan to protect his perfection and uprightness, and to defend the way of fearing God and shunning evil. In this contest, Job lost a mountain's worth of sheep and cattle, he lost all of his property, and he lost his sons and daughters. However, he did not abandon his perfection, uprightness, or fear of God. In other words, in this contest with Satan, Job preferred to be deprived of his property and children than lose his perfection, uprightness, and fear of God. He preferred to hold on to the root of what it means to be a man. The Scriptures provide a concise account of the entire process by which Job lost his assets, and also document Job's conduct and attitude. These terse, succinct accounts give the sense that Job was almost relaxed in facing this temptation, but if what actually happened were to be re-created—considering also the fact of Satan's malicious nature—then things would not be as simple or easy as described in these sentences. The reality was far crueler. Such is the level of devastation and hate with which Satan treats mankind and all those of whom God approves. If God had not asked that Satan not harm Job, Satan would have undoubtedly slain him without any compunction. Satan does not want anyone to worship God, nor does it wish for those who are righteous in God's eyes and those who are perfect and upright to be able to continue fearing God and shunning evil. For people to fear God and shun evil means that they shun and forsake Satan, and so Satan took advantage of God's permission to pile all of its rage and hate upon Job without mercy. You see, then, how great was the torment suffered by Job, from mind to flesh, from without to within. Today, we do not see how it was at that time, and can only gain, from the accounts of the Bible, a brief glimpse of Job's emotions when he was subjected to the torment at that time.

Job's Unshakable Integrity Brings Shame Upon Satan and Causes It to Flee in Panic

So, what did God do when Job was subjected to this torment? God observed, and watched, and awaited the outcome. As God observed and watched, how did He feel? He felt grief-stricken, of course. But is it possible that God could have regretted His permission to Satan to tempt Job just because of the grief He felt? The answer is, No, He could not have felt such regret. For He firmly believed that Job was perfect and upright, that he feared God and shunned evil. God had simply given Satan the opportunity to verify Job's righteousness before God, and to reveal its own wickedness and contemptibility. It was, furthermore, an opportunity for Job to testify to his righteousness and to his fear of God and shunning of evil before the people of the world, Satan, and even all those who follow God. Did the final outcome prove that God's assessment of Job was correct and without error? Did Job actually overcome Satan? Here we read of the archetypal words spoken by Job, words which are proof that he had overcome Satan. He said: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." This is Job's attitude of obedience toward God. Next, he said: "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah." These words spoken by Job prove that God observes the depths of man's heart, that He is able to look into the mind of man, and they prove that His approval of Job is without error, that this man who was approved by God was righteous. "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah." These words are Job's testimony to God. It was these ordinary words that cowed Satan, that brought shame upon it and caused it to flee in panic, and, moreover, that shackled Satan and left it without resources. So, too, did these words make Satan feel the wondrousness and might of the deeds of Jehovah God, and allow it to perceive the extraordinary charisma of one whose heart was ruled by the way of God. Moreover, they demonstrated to Satan the powerful vitality shown by a small and insignificant man in adhering to the way of fearing God and shunning

evil. Satan was thus defeated in the first contest. Despite having "learned from this," Satan had no intention of letting Job go, nor had there been any change in its malicious nature. Satan tried to carry on attacking Job, and so once more came before God ...

Next, let us read from the scriptures of the second time that Job was tempted.

3. Satan Once More Tempts Job (Sore Boils Break Out Across Job's Body)

a. The Words Spoken by God

Job 2:3 And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? and still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved Me against him, to destroy him without cause.

Job 2:6 And Jehovah said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life.

b. The Words Spoken by Satan

Job 2:4–5 And Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.

c. How Job Deals With the Trial

Job 2:9–10 Then said his wife to him, Do you still retain your integrity? curse God, and die. But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

Job 3:3–4 Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine on it.

Job's Love of the Way of God Surpasses All Else

The Scriptures document the words spoken between God and Satan as follows: "And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? and still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved Me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3). In this exchange, God repeats the same question to Satan. It is a question that shows us Jehovah God's affirmative assessment of what was demonstrated and lived out by Job during the first trial, and one that is no different to God's assessment of Job before he had undergone Satan's temptation. This is to say, before the temptation came upon him, in God's eyes Job was perfect, and thus God protected him and his family, and blessed him; he was worthy to be blessed in God's eyes. After the temptation, Job did not sin with his lips because he had lost his property and his children, but continued to praise the name of Jehovah. His actual conduct made God applaud him, and because of it, God gave him full marks. For in the eyes of Job,

his offspring or his assets were not enough to make him renounce God. God's place in his heart, in other words, could not be replaced by his children or any piece of property. During Job's first temptation, he showed God that his love for Him and his love for the way of fearing God and shunning evil surpassed all else. It is merely that this trial gave Job the experience of receiving a reward from Jehovah God and having his property and children taken away by Him.

For Job, this was a true experience that washed his soul clean; it was a baptism of life that fulfilled his existence, and, furthermore, it was a sumptuous feast that tested his obedience to, and fear of God. This temptation transformed Job's standing from that of a rich man to someone who had nothing, and it also allowed him to experience Satan's abuse of mankind. His destitution did not cause him to loathe Satan; rather, in Satan's vile acts he saw Satan's ugliness and contemptibility, as well as Satan's enmity and rebellion toward God, and this better encouraged him to forever hold firm to the way of fearing God and shunning evil. He swore that he would never forsake God and turn his back on the way of God because of external factors such as property, children or kinfolk, nor would he ever be a slave to Satan, property, or any person; apart from Jehovah God, no one could be his Lord or his God. Such were the aspirations of Job. On the other hand, Job had also acquired something from this temptation: He had gained great riches amid the trials given unto him by God.

During Job's life over the previous several decades, he had beheld the deeds of Jehovah and gained Jehovah God's blessings for him. They were blessings that left him feeling enormously uneasy and indebted, for he believed that he had not done anything for God, yet had been bequeathed with such great blessings and had enjoyed so much grace. For this reason, he often prayed in his heart, hoping that he would be able to repay God, hoping that he would have the opportunity to bear testimony to God's deeds and greatness, and hoping that God would put his obedience to the test, and, moreover, that his faith could be purified, until his obedience and his faith gained God's approval. Then, when the trial came upon Job, he believed that God had heard his prayers. Job cherished this opportunity more than anything else, and thus he did not dare treat it lightly, for his greatest lifelong wish could be realized. The arrival of this opportunity meant that his obedience and fear of God could be put to the test, and could be made pure. Moreover, it meant that Job had a chance to gain God's approval, thus bringing him closer to God. During the trial, such faith and pursuit allowed him to become more perfect, and to gain a greater understanding of God's will. Job also became more grateful for God's blessings and graces, in his heart he poured greater praise on the deeds of God, and he was more fearful and reverent of God, and longed more for God's loveliness, greatness, and holiness. At this time, though Job was still one who feared God and shunned evil in the eyes of God, with regard to his experiences, Job's faith and knowledge had progressed in leaps and bounds: His faith had increased, his obedience had gained a foothold, and his fear of God had become more profound. Though this trial

transformed Job's spirit and life, such a transformation did not satisfy Job, nor did it slow his progress onward. At the same time as calculating what he had gained from this trial, and considering his own deficiencies, he quietly prayed, waiting for the next trial to come upon him, because he yearned for his faith, obedience, and fear of God to be elevated during the next trial of God.

God observes the inmost thoughts of man and all that man says and does. Job's thoughts reached the ears of Jehovah God, and God listened to his prayers, and in this way God's next trial for Job arrived as expected.

Amid Extreme Suffering, Job Truly Realizes God's Care for Mankind

Following Jehovah God's questions to Satan, Satan was secretly happy. This was because Satan knew that it would once more be permitted to attack the man who was perfect in God's eyes—for Satan, this was a rare opportunity. Satan wanted to use this opportunity to completely undermine Job's conviction, to make him lose his faith in God and thus no longer fear God or bless the name of Jehovah. This would give Satan a chance: Whatever the place or time, it would be able to make Job a plaything beholden to its command. Satan hid its wicked intentions without trace, but it could not hold its evil nature in check. This truth is hinted at in its answer to the words of Jehovah God, as recorded in the scriptures: "And Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face" (Job 2:4–5). It is impossible not to gain an essential knowledge and sense of Satan's maliciousness from this exchange between God and Satan. Having heard these fallacies of Satan, all those who love the truth and detest evil will undoubtedly have a greater hate of Satan's ignobility and shamelessness, will feel appalled and disgusted by the fallacies of Satan, and, at the same time, will offer deep prayers and earnest wishes for Job, praying that this man of uprightness can achieve perfection, wishing that this man who fears God and shuns evil will forever overcome the temptations of Satan, and live in the light, amid God's guidance and blessings; so, too, such people will wish that Job's righteous deeds can forever spur on and encourage all those who pursue the way of fearing God and shunning evil. Though Satan's malicious intent can be seen in this proclamation, God breezily consented to Satan's "request"—but He also made one condition: "He is in your hand; but save his life" (Job 2:6). Because, this time, Satan asked to stretch forth its hand to harm Job's flesh and bones, God said, "but save his life." The meaning of these words is that He gave Job's flesh to Satan, but Job's life was God's to keep. Satan could not take Job's life, but apart from this Satan could employ any means or method against Job.

After gaining God's permission, Satan rushed to Job and stretched forth its hand to afflict his skin, causing sore boils all over his body, and Job felt pain upon his skin. Job praised the wondrousness and holiness of Jehovah God, which made Satan even more

flagrant in its audaciousness. Because it had felt the joy of hurting man, Satan stretched forth its hand and raked Job's flesh, causing his sore boils to fester. Job immediately felt a pain and torment upon his flesh that was without parallel, and he could not help but knead himself from head to foot with his hands, as if this would relieve the blow that had been dealt to his spirit by this pain of his flesh. He realized that God was by his side watching him, and he tried his best to steel himself. He once more knelt to the ground, and said: "You look within man's heart, You observe his misery; why does his weakness concern You? Praised be the name of Jehovah God." Satan saw the unbearable pain of Job, but it did not see Job forsake the name of Jehovah God. Thus it hastily stretched forth its hand to afflict the bones of Job, desperate to tear him limb from limb. In an instant, Job felt unprecedented torment; it was as if his flesh had been ripped apart from the bones, and as if his bones were being smashed apart piece by piece. This agonizing torment made him think it would be better to die.... His ability to bear this pain had reached its limit.... He wanted to cry out, he wanted to tear at the skin on his body in an attempt to lessen the pain—yet he held back his screams, and did not tear at the skin on his body, for he did not want to let Satan see his weakness. So Job knelt once more, but at this time he felt not the presence of Jehovah God. He knew that Jehovah God was often before him, and behind him, and on either side of him. Yet during his pain, God had never once watched; He covered His face and was hidden, for the meaning of His creation of man was not to bring suffering upon man. At this time, Job was weeping and doing his best to endure this physical agony, yet he could no longer keep himself from giving thanks to God: "Man falls at the first blow, he is weak and powerless, he is young and ignorant—why would You wish to be so caring and tender toward him? You strike me, yet it hurts You to do so. What of man is worth Your care and concern?" Job's prayers reached the ears of God, and God was silent, only watching without making any sound.... Having tried every trick in the book to no avail, Satan quietly departed, yet this did not bring an end to God's trials of Job. Because the power of God that had been revealed in Job had not been made public, the story of Job did not end with the retreat of Satan. As other characters made their entry, more spectacular scenes were yet to come.

Another Manifestation of Job's Fear of God and Shunning of Evil Is His Extolling of God's Name in All Things

Job had suffered the ravages of Satan, yet still he did not forsake the name of Jehovah God. His wife was the first to step out and, playing the role of Satan in a form that is visible to the eyes of man, attacked Job. The original text describes it thus: "Then said his wife to him, Do you still retain your integrity? curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). These were the words spoken by Satan in the guise of man. They were an attack, and an accusation, as well as enticement, a temptation, and slander. Having failed in attacking Job's flesh, Satan then directly attacked Job's integrity, wishing to use this to

make Job give up his integrity, renounce God, and no longer go on living. So, too, did Satan wish to use such words to tempt Job: If Job forsook the name of Jehovah, then he need not endure such torment; he could free himself from the torment of the flesh. Faced with the advice of his wife, Job reprimanded her by saying, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Job had long known these words, but at this time the truth of Job's knowledge of them was proven.

When his wife advised him to curse God and die, her meaning was: "Your God treats you thus, so why not curse Him? What are you doing still living? Your God is so unfair to you, yet still you say 'blessed be the name of Jehovah.' How could He bring disaster upon you when you bless His name? Hurry up and forsake the name of God, and follow Him no more. Then, your troubles will be over." At this moment, there was produced the testimony that God wished to see in Job. No ordinary person could bear such testimony, nor do we read of it in any of the stories of the Bible—but God had seen it long before Job spoke these words. God merely wished to use this opportunity to allow Job to prove to all that God was right. Faced with the advice of his wife, Job not only did not give up his integrity or renounce God, but he also said to his wife: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Do these words carry great weight? Here, there is only one fact capable of proving the weight of these words. The weight of these words is that they are approved of by God in His heart, they are what was desired by God, they are what God wanted to hear, and they are the outcome that God yearned to see; these words are also the marrow of Job's testimony. In this, Job's perfection, uprightness, fear of God, and shunning of evil were proven. The preciousness of Job lay in how, when he was tempted, and even when his whole body was covered with sore boils, when he endured the utmost torment, and when his wife and kinfolk advised him, he still uttered such words. To put it in another way, in his heart he believed that, no matter what temptations, or however grievous the tribulations or torment, even if death was to come upon him, he would not renounce God or spurn the way of fearing God and shunning evil. You see, then, that God held the most important place in his heart, and that there was only God in his heart. It is because of this that we read such descriptions of him in the Scriptures as: In all this did not Job sin with his lips. Not only did he not sin with his lips, but in his heart he did not complain about God. He did not say hurtful words about God, nor did he sin against God. Not only did his mouth bless the name of God, but in his heart he also blessed the name of God; his mouth and heart were as one. This was the true Job seen by God, and this was the very reason why God treasured Job.

People's Many Misunderstandings About Job

The hardship suffered by Job was not the work of messengers sent by God, nor was it caused by God's own hand. Instead, it was personally caused by Satan, the enemy of God. Consequently, the level of hardship suffered by Job was profound. Yet at this

moment Job demonstrated, without reserve, his everyday knowledge of God in his heart, the principles of his everyday actions, and his attitude toward God—this is the truth. If Job had not been tempted, if God had not brought trials upon Job, when Job said, "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah," you would say that Job is a hypocrite; God had given him so many assets, so of course he blessed the name of Jehovah. If, before being subjected to trials, Job had said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" you would say that Job was exaggerating, and that he would not forsake the name of God since he was often blessed by the hand of God. You would say that if God had brought disaster upon him, then he would surely have forsaken the name of God. Yet when Job found himself in circumstances that no one would wish for or wish to see, circumstances that nobody would wish to befall them, which they would fear befalling them, circumstances that even God could not bear to watch, Job was still able to hold on to his integrity: "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah," and "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Faced with Job's conduct at this time, those who love to talk high-sounding words, and who love to speak letters and doctrines, all are left speechless. Those who extol God's name in speech only, yet have never accepted the trials of God, are condemned by the integrity to which Job held firm, and those who have never believed that man is able to hold firm to the way of God are judged by Job's testimony. Faced with Job's conduct during these trials and the words that he spoke, some people will feel confused, some will feel envious, some will feel doubtful, and some will even appear disinterested, turning their noses up at the testimony of Job because they not only see the torment that befell Job during the trials, and read of the words spoken by Job, but also see the human "weakness" displayed by Job when the trials came upon him. This "weakness" they believe to be the supposed imperfection in the perfection of Job, the blemish in a man who in God's eyes was perfect. This is to say that it is believed that those who are perfect are flawless, without stain or sully, that they have no weaknesses, have no knowledge of pain, that they never feel unhappy or dejected, and are without hate or any externally extreme behavior; as a result, the great majority of people do not believe that Job was truly perfect. People do not approve of much of his behavior during his trials. For example, when Job lost his property and children, he did not, as people would imagine, break into tears. His "lack of decorum" makes people think he was cold, for he was without tears or affection for his family. This is the initial bad impression that people have of Job. They find his behavior after that even more perplexing: "Rent his mantle" has been interpreted by people as his disrespect for God, and "shaved his head" is wrongly believed to mean Job's blasphemy and opposition to God. Apart from Job's words that "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah," people discern none of the righteousness in Job that was praised by God, and thus the assessment of Job made by the great majority of them is nothing more than incomprehension, misunderstanding, doubt,

condemnation, and approval in theory only. None of them are able to truly understand and appreciate Jehovah God's words that Job was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and shunned evil.

Based on their impression of Job above, people have further doubts as to his righteousness, for Job's actions and his conduct recorded in the scriptures were not as earth-shatteringly moving as people would have imagined. Not only did he not carry out any great feats, but he also took a potsherd to scrape himself while sitting among the ashes. This act also astonishes people and causes them to doubt—and even deny— Job's righteousness, for while scraping himself Job did not pray or make promises to God; nor, moreover, was he seen to weep tears of pain. At this time, people only see the weakness of Job and nothing else, and thus even when they hear Job say "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" they are completely unmoved, or else undecided, and are still unable to discern the righteousness of Job from his words. The basic impression that Job gives people during the torment of his trials is that he was neither cringing nor arrogant. People do not see the story behind his behavior that played out in the depths of his heart, nor do they see fear of God within his heart or his adherence to the principle of the way of shunning evil. His equanimity makes people think his perfection and uprightness were but empty words, that his fear of God was merely hearsay; the "weakness" that he revealed externally, meanwhile, leaves a profound impression on them, giving them a "new perspective" on, and even a "new understanding" toward the man whom God defines as perfect and upright. Such a "new perspective" and "new understanding" are proven when Job opened his mouth and cursed the day he was born.

Though the level of torment he suffered is unimaginable and incomprehensible to any man, he spoke no words of heresy, but only lessened the pain of his body by his own means. As recorded in the Scriptures, he said: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived" (Job 3:3). Perhaps, no one has ever considered these words important, and perhaps there are people who have paid attention to them. In your view, do they mean that Job opposed God? Are they a complaint against God? I know that many of you have certain ideas about these words spoken by Job and believe that if Job was perfect and upright, he should not have shown any weakness or grief, and ought instead to have faced any attack from Satan positively, and even smiled in the face of Satan's temptations. He should not have had the slightest reaction to any of the torment brought upon his flesh by Satan, nor should he have displayed any of the emotions within his heart. He should even have asked that God make these trials even harsher. This is what should be demonstrated and possessed by someone who is unwavering and who truly fears God and shuns evil. Amid this extreme torment, Job did but curse the day of his birth. He did not complain about God, much less did he have any intention of opposing God. This is much easier said than done, for since ancient times until today, no one has ever experienced such temptations or suffered that which befell Job. So, why has no one ever been subjected to the same kind of temptation as Job? It is because, as God sees it, no one is able to bear such a responsibility or commission, no one could do as Job did, and, moreover, no one could still, apart from cursing the day of their birth, not forsake the name of God and continue to bless the name of Jehovah God, as Job did when such torment befell him. Could anyone do this? When we say this about Job, are we commending his behavior? He was a righteous man, and able to bear such testimony to God, and capable of making Satan flee with its head in its hands, so that it never again came before God to accuse him—so what is wrong with commending him? Could it be that you have higher standards than God? Could it be that you would act even better than Job when trials come upon you? Job was praised by God—what objections could you have?

Job Curses the Day of His Birth Because He Does Not Want God to Be Pained by Him

I often say that God looks within people's hearts, while people look at people's exteriors. Because God looks within people's hearts, He understands their essence, whereas people define other people's essence based on their exterior. When Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth, this act astonished all the spiritual figures, including the three friends of Job. Man came from God, and should be thankful for the life and flesh, as well as the day of his birth, bestowed upon him by God, and he should not curse them. This is something that ordinary people can understand and conceive. For anyone who follows God, this understanding is sacred and inviolable, and it is a truth that can never change. Job, on the other hand, broke the rules: He cursed the day of his birth. This is an act that ordinary people consider to constitute crossing over into forbidden territory. Not only is Job not entitled to people's understanding and sympathy, he is also not entitled to God's forgiveness. At the same time, even more people become doubtful toward Job's righteousness, for it seemed that God's favor toward him made Job self-indulgent; it made him so bold and reckless that not only did he not thank God for blessing him and caring for him during his lifetime, but he damned the day of his birth to destruction. What is this, if not opposition to God? Such superficialities provide people with the proof to condemn this act of Job, but who can know what Job was truly thinking at that time? Who can know the reason why Job acted in that way? Only God and Job himself know the inside story and reasons here.

When Satan stretched forth its hand to afflict the bones of Job, Job fell into its clutches, without the means to escape or the strength to resist. His body and soul suffered enormous pain, and this pain made him deeply aware of the insignificance, frailty, and powerlessness of man living in the flesh. At the same time, he also gained a profound appreciation and understanding of why God is of a mind to care for and look after mankind. In Satan's clutches, Job realized that man, who is of flesh and blood, is

actually so powerless and weak. When he fell to his knees and prayed to God, he felt as if God was covering His face and hiding, for God had completely placed him in the hands of Satan. At the same time, God also wept for him, and, moreover, was aggrieved for him; God was pained by his pain, and hurt by his hurt.... Job felt God's pain, as well as how unbearable it was for God.... Job did not want to bring any more grief upon God, nor did he want God to weep for him, much less did he want to see God pained by him. At this moment, Job wanted only to divest himself of his flesh, to no longer endure the pain brought upon him by this flesh, for this would stop God being tormented by his pain—yet he could not, and he had to tolerate not only the pain of the flesh, but also the torment of not wishing to make God anxious. These two pains—one from the flesh, and one from the spirit—brought heart-rending, gut-wrenching pain upon Job, and made him feel how the limitations of man who is of flesh and blood can make one feel frustrated and helpless. Under these circumstances, his yearning for God grew fiercer, and his loathing of Satan became more intense. At this time, Job would have preferred to have never been born into the world of man, would rather that he did not exist, than see God cry tears or feel pain for his sake. He began to deeply loathe his flesh, to be sick and tired of himself, of the day of his birth, and even of all that which was connected to him. He did not wish there to be any more mention of his day of birth or anything to do with it, and so he opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine on it" (Job 3:3–4). Job's words bear his loathing for himself, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived," as well as the blame he felt toward himself and his sense of indebtedness for having caused pain to God, "Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine on it." These two passages are the ultimate expression of how Job felt then, and fully demonstrate his perfection and uprightness to all. At the same time, just as Job had wished, his faith and obedience to God, as well as his fear of God, were truly elevated. Of course, this elevation is precisely the effect that God had expected.

Job Defeats Satan and Becomes a True Man in the Eyes of God

When Job first underwent his trials, he was stripped of all his property and all of his children, but he did not fall down or say anything that was a sin against God as a result. He had overcome the temptations of Satan, and he had overcome his material assets, his offspring and the trial of losing all his worldly possessions, which is to say he was able to obey God as He took things away from him and he was also able to offer thanks and praise to God because of what God did. Such was Job's conduct during Satan's first temptation, and such was also Job's testimony during the first trial of God. In the second trial, Satan stretched forth its hand to afflict Job, and although Job experienced pain greater than he had ever felt before, still his testimony was enough to leave people

astounded. He used his fortitude, conviction, and obedience to God, as well as his fear of God, to once more defeat Satan, and his conduct and his testimony were once more approved of and favored by God. During this temptation, Job used his actual conduct to proclaim to Satan that the pain of the flesh could not alter his faith and obedience to God or take away his devotion to God and fear of God; he would not renounce God or give up his own perfection and uprightness because he faced death. Job's determination made a coward of Satan, his faith left Satan timorous and trembling, the intensity with which he fought against Satan during their life-and-death battle bred in Satan a deep hatred and resentment; his perfection and uprightness left Satan with nothing more it could do to him, such that Satan abandoned its attacks on him and gave up its accusations against Job that it had laid before Jehovah God. This meant that Job had overcome the world, he had overcome the flesh, he had overcome Satan, and he had overcome death; he was completely and utterly a man who belonged to God. During these two trials, Job stood firm in his testimony, actually lived out his perfection and uprightness, and broadened the scope of his living principles of fearing God and shunning evil. Having undergone these two trials, there was born in Job a richer experience, and this experience made him more mature and seasoned, it made him stronger, and of greater conviction, and it made him more confident of the rightness and worthiness of the integrity to which he held firm. Jehovah God's trials of Job gave him a deep understanding and sense of God's concern for man, and allowed him to sense the preciousness of God's love, from which point consideration toward and love for God were added into his fear of God. The trials of Jehovah God not only did not alienate Job from Him, but brought his heart closer to God. When the fleshly pain endured by Job reached its peak, the concern that he felt from Jehovah God gave him no choice but to curse the day of his birth. Such conduct was not long-planned, but a natural revelation of the consideration for and love for God from within his heart, it was a natural revelation that came from his consideration for and love for God. This is to say, because he loathed himself, and he was unwilling to, and could not stand to torment God, thus his consideration and love reached the point of selflessness. At this time, Job elevated his long-standing adoration and yearning for God and devotion to God to the level of consideration and loving. At the same time, he also elevated his faith and obedience to God and fear of God to the level of consideration and loving. He did not allow himself to do anything that would cause harm to God, he did not permit himself any conduct that would hurt God, and did not allow himself to bring any sorrow, grief, or even unhappiness upon God for his own reasons. In God's eyes, although Job was still the same Job as before, Job's faith, obedience, and fear of God had brought God complete satisfaction and enjoyment. At this time, Job had attained the perfection that God had expected him to attain; he had become someone truly worthy of being called "perfect and upright" in God's eyes. His righteous deeds allowed him to overcome Satan and to stand fast in his testimony to God. So, too, his righteous deeds made him perfect, and allowed the value

of his life to be elevated and transcend more than ever, and they also made him the first person to no longer be attacked and tempted by Satan. Because Job was righteous, he was accused and tempted by Satan; because Job was righteous, he was handed over to Satan; and because Job was righteous, he overcame and defeated Satan, and stood firm in his testimony. Henceforth Job became the first man who would never again be handed over to Satan, he truly came before the throne of God and lived in the light, under the blessings of God without the spying or ruination of Satan.... He had become a true man in the eyes of God; he had been set free ...

About Job

Having learned of how Job went through the trials, most of you will likely want to know more details about Job himself, particularly with regard to the secret by which he gained God's praise. So today, let us talk about Job!

In Job's Daily Life We See His Perfection, Uprightness, Fear of God, and Shunning of Evil

If we are to discuss Job, then we must start with the assessment of him uttered from God's own mouth: "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil."

Let us first learn about Job's perfection and uprightness.

What is your understanding of the words "perfect" and "upright"? Do you believe that Job was without reproach, that he was honorable? This, of course, would be a literal interpretation and understanding of the words "perfect" and "upright." But the context of real life is integral to a true understanding of Job—words, books, and theory alone will not provide any answers. We will start by looking at Job's home life, at what his normal conduct was like during his life. This will tell us about his principles and objectives in life, as well as about his personality and pursuit. Now, let us read the final words of Job 1:3: "This man was the greatest of all the men of the east." What these words are saying is that Job's status and standing were very high, and though we are not told whether the reason why he was the greatest of all men of the east was because of his abundant assets, or because he was perfect and upright and feared God while shunning evil, overall, we know that Job's status and standing were much prized. As recorded in the Bible, people's first impressions of Job were that Job was perfect, that he feared God and shunned evil, and that he was possessed of great wealth and venerable status. For a normal person living in such an environment and under such conditions, Job's diet, quality of life, and the various aspects of his personal life would be the focus of most people's attention; thus we must continue reading the scriptures: "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered

burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually" (Job 1:4–5). This passage tells us two things: The first is that Job's sons and daughters regularly feasted, with much eating and drinking; the second is that Job frequently offered burnt sacrifices because he often worried for his sons and daughters, fearful that they were sinning, that in their hearts they had renounced God. In this are described the lives of two different types of people. The first, Job's sons and daughters, often feasted because of their affluence, lived extravagantly, wined and dined to their heart's content, and enjoyed the high quality of life brought by material wealth. Living such a life, it was inevitable that they would often sin and offend God—yet they did not sanctify themselves or offer burnt offerings. You see, then, that God had no place in their hearts, that they gave no thought to God's graces, nor feared offending God, much less did they fear renouncing God in their hearts. Of course, our focus is not on Job's children, but on what Job did when faced with such things; this is the other matter described in the passage, which involves Job's daily life and the essence of his humanity. Where the Bible describes the feasting of Job's sons and daughters, there is no mention of Job; it is said only that his sons and daughters often ate and drank together. In other words, he did not hold feasts, nor did he join his sons and daughters in eating extravagantly. Though affluent and possessed of many assets and servants, Job's life was not a luxurious one. He was not beguiled by his superlative living environment, and he did not, because of his wealth, gorge himself on the enjoyments of the flesh or forget to offer burnt offerings, and much less did it cause him to gradually shun God in his heart. Evidently, then, Job was disciplined in his lifestyle, was not greedy or hedonistic as a result of God's blessings to him, and he did not fixate upon quality of life. Instead, he was humble and modest, he was not given to ostentation, and he was cautious and careful before God. He often gave thought to God's graces and blessings, and was continually fearful of God. In his daily life, Job often rose early to offer burnt offerings for his sons and daughters. In other words, not only did Job himself fear God, but he also hoped that his children would likewise fear God and not sin against God. Job's material wealth held no place within his heart, nor did it replace the position held by God; whether for his own sake or his children's, Job's daily actions were all connected to fearing God and shunning evil. His fear of Jehovah God did not stop at his mouth, but was something he put into action and reflected in each and every part of his daily life. This actual conduct by Job shows us that he was honest, and was possessed of an essence that loved justice and things that were positive. That Job often sent and sanctified his sons and daughters means he did not sanction or approve of his children's behavior; instead, in his heart he was frustrated with their behavior, and condemned them. He had concluded that the behavior of his sons and daughters was not pleasing to Jehovah God, and thus he often called on them to go before Jehovah God and confess their sins. Job's actions show us another side of his humanity, one in which he never walked with those who often sinned and offended God, but instead

shunned and avoided them. Even though these people were his sons and daughters, he did not forsake his own principles of conduct because they were his own kin, nor did he indulge their sins because of his own sentiments. Rather, he urged them to confess and gain Jehovah God's forbearance, and he warned them not to forsake God for the sake of their own greedy enjoyment. The principles of how Job treated others are inseparable from the principles of his fear of God and shunning of evil. He loved that which was accepted by God, and loathed that which repulsed God; he loved those who feared God in their hearts, and loathed those who committed evil or sinned against God. Such love and loathing was demonstrated in his everyday life, and was the very uprightness of Job seen by God's eyes. Naturally, this is also the expression and living out of Job's true humanity in his relations with others in his daily life, about which we must learn.

The Manifestations of Job's Humanity During His Trials (Understanding Job's Perfection, Uprightness, Fear of God, and Shunning of Evil During His Trials)

What we have shared above are the various aspects of Job's humanity that were exhibited in his daily life prior to his tests. Without doubt, these various manifestations provide an initial acquaintance with and understanding of Job's uprightness, fear of God, and shunning of evil, and naturally provide an initial affirmation. The reason why I say "initial" is because most people still do not have a true understanding of Job's personality and the degree to which he pursued the way of obeying and fearing God. This is to say, most people's understanding of Job does not extend any deeper than the somewhat favorable impression of him provided by two passages in the Bible containing his words "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" and "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Thus, there is a great need for us to understand how Job lived out his humanity as he received God's trials; in this way, Job's true humanity will be shown to all in its entirety.

When Job heard that his property had been stolen, that his sons and daughters had lost their lives, and that his servants had been killed, he reacted as follows: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground, and worshipped" (Job 1:20). These words tell us one fact: After hearing this news, Job was not panic-stricken, he did not cry or blame the servants who had given him the news, much less did he inspect the scene of the crime to investigate and verify the details and find out what really happened. He did not exhibit any pain or regret at the loss of his possessions, nor did he break down in tears due to the loss of his children and his loved ones. On the contrary, he rent his mantle, and shaved his head, fell down on the ground, and worshiped. Job's actions are unlike those of any ordinary man. They confuse many people, and make them reprimand Job in their hearts for his "cold-bloodedness." At the sudden loss of their possessions, normal people would appear heartbroken or despairing—or, in the case of some people, they might even fall into deep depression.

That is because, in their hearts, people's property represents a lifetime of effort—it is that which their survival relies upon, it is the hope that keeps them living; the loss of their property means their efforts have been for nothing, that they are without hope, and even that they have no future. This is any normal person's attitude toward their property and the close relationship they have with it, and this is also the importance of property in people's eyes. As such, the great majority of people feel confused by Job's indifferent attitude toward the loss of his property. Today, we are going to dispel the confusion all these people felt by explaining what was going on within Job's heart.

Common sense dictates that, having been given such abundant assets by God, Job should feel ashamed before God because of losing these assets, for he had not looked after or taken care of them; he had not held on to the assets given to him by God. Thus, when he heard that his property had been stolen, his first reaction should have been to go to the scene of the crime and take inventory of everything that had been lost, and then to confess to God so that he might once more receive God's blessings. Job, however, did not do this, and he naturally had his own reasons for not doing so. In his heart, Job profoundly believed that all he possessed had been bestowed upon him by God, and was not the product of his own labor. Thus, he did not see these blessings as something to be capitalized upon, but instead anchored the principles of his survival in holding on with all his might to the way that should be upheld. He cherished God's blessings and gave thanks for them, but he was not enamored of blessings, nor did he seek more of them. Such was his attitude toward property. He neither did anything for the sake of gaining blessings, nor worried about or was aggrieved by the lack or loss of God's blessings; he neither became wildly, deliriously happy because of God's blessings, nor ignored the way of God or forgot the grace of God because of the blessings he frequently enjoyed. Job's attitude toward his property reveals to people his true humanity: Firstly, Job was not a greedy man, and was undemanding in his material life. Secondly, Job never worried or feared that God would take away all that he had, which was his attitude of obedience toward God in his heart; that is, he had no demands or complaints about when or whether God would take from him, and did not ask the reason why, but only sought to obey the arrangements of God. Thirdly, he never believed that his assets came from his own labors, but that they were bestowed unto him by God. This was Job's faith in God, and is an indication of his conviction. Are Job's humanity and his true daily pursuit made clear in this three-point summary of him? Job's humanity and pursuit were integral to his cool conduct when faced with the loss of his property. It was precisely because of his daily pursuit that Job had the stature and conviction to say, "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah," during the trials of God. These words were not gained overnight, nor had they just appeared in Job's head. They were what he had seen and acquired during many years of experiencing life. Compared to all those who only seek God's blessings and who fear that God will take from them, and who hate it and complain about it, is Job's obedience

not very real? Compared to all those who believe that there is a God, but who have never believed that God rules over all things, does Job not possess great honesty and uprightness?

Job's Rationality

Job's actual experiences and his upright and honest humanity meant that he made the most rational judgment and choices when he lost his assets and his children. Such rational choices were inseparable from his daily pursuits and the deeds of God that he had come to know during his day-to-day life. Job's honesty made him able to believe that Jehovah's hand rules over all things; his belief allowed him to know the fact of Jehovah God's sovereignty over all things; his knowledge made him willing and able to obey Jehovah God's sovereignty and arrangements; his obedience enabled him to be more and more true in his fear of Jehovah God; his fear made him more and more real in his shunning of evil; ultimately, Job became perfect because he feared God and shunned evil; his perfection made him wise, and gave him the utmost rationality.

How should we understand this word, "rational"? A literal interpretation is that it means being of good sense, being logical and sensible in one's thinking, being of sound speech, actions, and judgment, and possessing sound and regular moral standards. Yet Job's rationality is not so easily explained. When it is said here that Job was possessed of the utmost rationality, this is said in connection with his humanity and his conduct before God. Because Job was honest, he was able to believe in and obey the sovereignty of God, which gave him a knowledge that was unobtainable by others, and this knowledge made him able to more accurately discern, judge, and define that which befell him, which enabled him to more accurately and perspicaciously choose what to do and what to hold firm to. This is to say that his words, behavior, the principles behind his actions, and the code by which he acted, were regular, clear, and specific, and were not blind, impulsive, or emotional. He knew how to treat whatever befell him, he knew how to balance and handle the relationships between complex events, he knew how to hold fast to the way that should be held fast to, and, moreover, he knew how to treat the giving and taking away of Jehovah God. This was the very rationality of Job. It was precisely because Job was equipped with such rationality that he said, "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah," when he lost his assets and his sons and daughters.

When Job was faced with enormous pain of the body, and with the remonstrations of his kinfolk and friends, and when he was faced with death, his actual conduct once again showed his true face to all people.

The Real Face of Job: True, Pure, and Without Falsity

Let us read Job 2:7–8: "So went Satan forth from the presence of Jehovah, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown. And he took him a

potsherd to scrape himself with; and he sat down among the ashes." This is a description of Job's conduct when sore boils sprouted upon his body. At this time, Job sat in the ashes as he endured the pain. No one treated him, and no one helped him lessen the pain of his body; instead, he used a potsherd to scrape away the surface of the sore boils. Superficially, this was merely a stage in Job's torment, and bears no relation to his humanity and fear of God, for Job spoke no words to express his mood and views at this time. Yet Job's actions and his conduct are still a true expression of his humanity. In the record of the previous chapter we read that Job was the greatest of all the men of the east. This passage from the second chapter, meanwhile, shows us that this great man of the east actually took a potsherd to scrape himself while sitting among the ashes. Is there not an obvious contrast between these two descriptions? It is a contrast that shows us Job's true self: Despite his prestigious standing and status, he had never loved nor paid these things any attention; he cared not how others viewed his standing, nor was he concerned about whether his actions or conduct would have any negative effect on his standing; he did not indulge in the benefits of status, nor did he enjoy the glory that came with status and standing. He only cared about his value and the significance of his living in the eyes of Jehovah God. Job's true self was his very essence: He did not love fame and fortune, and did not live for fame and fortune; he was true, and pure, and without falsity.

Job's Separation of Love and Hate

Another side of Job's humanity is demonstrated in this exchange between him and his wife: "Then said his wife to him, Do you still retain your integrity? curse God, and die. But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:9-10). Seeing the torment he was suffering, Job's wife tried to give Job advice to help him escape his torment, yet her "good intentions" did not gain Job's approval; instead, they stirred his anger, for she denied his faith in, and obedience to Jehovah God, and also denied the existence of Jehovah God. This was intolerable to Job, for he had never allowed himself to do anything that opposed or hurt God, to say nothing of others. How could be remain indifferent when he saw others speak words that blasphemed against and insulted God? Thus he called his wife a "foolish woman." Job's attitude toward his wife was one of anger and hate, as well as reproach and reprimand. This was the natural expression of Job's humanity—differentiating between love and hate—and it was a true representation of his upright humanity. Job was possessed of a sense of justice—one which made him hate the winds and tides of wickedness, and loathe, condemn, and reject absurd heresy, ridiculous arguments, and ludicrous assertions, and allowed him to hold true to his own, correct principles and stance when he had been rejected by the masses and deserted by those who were close to him.

The Kindheartedness and Sincerity of Job

Since, from Job's conduct, we are able to see the expression of various aspects of his humanity, what of Job's humanity do we see when he opened his mouth to curse the day of his birth? This is the topic we will share below.

Above, I have talked of the origins of Job's cursing of the day of his birth. What do you see in this? If Job were hardhearted and without love, if he were cold and emotionless and bereft of humanity, could he have cared for God's heart's desire? Could he have despised the day of his own birth because he cared for God's heart? In other words, if Job were hardhearted and bereft of humanity, could he have been distressed by God's pain? Could he have cursed the day of his birth because God had been aggrieved by him? The answer is, Absolutely not! Because he was kindhearted, Job cared for God's heart; because he cared for God's heart, Job sensed God's pain; because he was kindhearted, he suffered greater torment as a result of sensing God's pain; because he sensed God's pain, he began to loathe the day of his birth, and thus cursed the day of his birth. To outsiders, Job's entire conduct during his trials is exemplary. Only his cursing of the day of his birth paints a question mark above his perfection and uprightness, or provides a different assessment. In fact, this was the truest expression of the essence of Job's humanity. The essence of his humanity was not concealed or packaged, or revised by someone else. When he cursed the day of his birth, he demonstrated the kindheartedness and sincerity deep within his heart; he was like a spring whose waters are so clear and transparent as to reveal its bottom.

Having learned all this about Job, most people will undoubtedly have a fairly accurate and objective assessment of the essence of Job's humanity. They should also have a profound, practical, and more advanced understanding and appreciation of the perfection and uprightness of Job as spoken of by God. Hopefully, this understanding and appreciation will help people embark upon the way of fearing God and shunning evil.

The Relationship Between God's Consignment of Job to Satan and the Aims of God's Work

Although most people now recognize that Job was perfect and upright and that he feared God and shunned evil, this recognition does not give them a greater understanding of God's intention. At the same time as envying Job's humanity and pursuit, they ask the following question of God: Job was so perfect and upright, people adore him so much, so why did God hand him over to Satan and subject him to so much torment? Such questions are bound to exist in many people's hearts—or rather, this doubt is the question in many people's hearts. Since it has confounded so many people, we must open up this question and explain it properly.

Everything that God does is necessary and possessed of extraordinary significance, for all that He does in man concerns His management and the salvation of mankind.

Naturally, the work that God did in Job is no different, even though Job was perfect and upright in the eyes of God. In other words, regardless of what God does or the means by which He does it, regardless of the cost, regardless of His objective, the purpose of His actions does not change. His purpose is to work God's words into man, as well as God's requirements and will for man; in other words, it is to work into man all that God believes to be positive in accordance with His steps, enabling man to understand God's heart and comprehend God's essence, and allowing man to obey God's sovereignty and arrangements, thus allowing man to attain fear of God and shunning of evil—all of this is one aspect of God's purpose in all He does. The other aspect is that, because Satan is the foil and service object in God's work, man is often given to Satan; this is the means God uses to allow people to see in Satan's temptations and attacks the wickedness, ugliness, and contemptibility of Satan, thus causing people to hate Satan and be able to know and recognize that which is negative. This process allows them to gradually free themselves from Satan's control and accusations, interference, and attacks—until, thanks to God's words, their knowledge and obedience of God, and their faith in God and fear of Him, they triumph over the attacks and accusations of Satan; only then will they have been completely delivered from the domain of Satan. People's deliverance means that Satan has been defeated, it means that they are no longer the food in Satan's mouth—instead of swallowing them, Satan has relinquished them. This is because such people are upright, because they have faith, obedience, and fear toward God, and because they completely break with Satan. They bring shame upon Satan, they make a coward of Satan, and they utterly defeat Satan. Their conviction in following God, and obedience to and fear of God defeat Satan, and make Satan completely give them up. Only people such as this have truly been gained by God, and it is this which is God's ultimate objective in saving man. If they wish to be saved, and wish to be completely gained by God, then all those who follow God must face temptations and attacks both great and small from Satan. Those who emerge from these temptations and attacks and are able to fully defeat Satan are those who have been saved by God. This is to say, those who have been saved unto God are those who have undergone God's trials, and who have been tempted and attacked by Satan an untold number of times. Those who have been saved unto God understand God's will and requirements, and are able to acquiesce to God's sovereignty and arrangements, and they do not forsake the way of fearing God and shunning evil amid Satan's temptations. Those who are saved unto God possess honesty, they are kindhearted, they differentiate between love and hate, they have a sense of justice and are rational, and they are able to care for God and treasure all that is of God. Such people are not bound, spied upon, accused, or abused by Satan; they are completely free, they have been completely liberated and released. Job was just such a man of freedom, and this is precisely the significance of why God had handed him over to Satan.

Job was abused by Satan, but he also gained eternal freedom and liberation, and

he gained the right to never again be subjected to Satan's corruption, abuse, and accusations, to instead live in the light of God's countenance free and unencumbered, and to live amid God's blessings given to him. No one could take away, or destroy, or seize this right. It was given to Job in return for his faith, determination, and obedience to and fear of God; Job paid the price of his life to win joy and happiness on earth and to win the right and entitlement, as ordained by Heaven and acknowledged by earth, to worship the Creator without interference as a true creature of God on earth. Such was also the greatest outcome of the temptations endured by Job.

When people have yet to be saved, their lives are often interfered with, and even controlled by, Satan. In other words, people who have not been saved are prisoners to Satan, they have no freedom, they have not been relinquished by Satan, they are not qualified or entitled to worship God, and they are closely pursued and viciously attacked by Satan. Such people have no happiness to speak of, they have no right to a normal existence to speak of, and moreover they have no dignity to speak of. Only if you stand up and do battle with Satan, using your faith in God and obedience to, and fear of God as the weapons with which to fight a life-and-death battle with Satan, such that you fully defeat Satan and cause it to turn tail and become cowardly whenever it sees you, so that it completely abandons its attacks and accusations against you—only then will you be saved and become free. If you are determined to fully break with Satan, but are not equipped with the weapons that will help you defeat Satan, then you will still be in danger. As time goes on, when you have been so tortured by Satan that there is not an ounce of strength left in you, yet you have still been unable to bear testimony, have still not completely freed yourself of Satan's accusations and attacks against you, then you will have little hope of salvation. In the end, when the conclusion of God's work is proclaimed, you will still be in the grip of Satan, unable to free yourself, and thus you will never have a chance or hope. The implication, then, is that such people will be completely in Satan's captivity.

Accept God's Tests, Overcome Satan's Temptations, and Allow God to Gain Your Whole Being

During the work of God's abiding provision and support of man, He tells the entirety of His will and requirements to man, and shows His deeds, disposition, and what He has and is to man. The objective is to equip man with stature, and to allow man to gain various truths from God while following Him—truths that are the weapons given to man by God with which to fight Satan. Thus equipped, man must face God's tests. God has many means and avenues for testing man, but every one of them requires the "cooperation" of God's enemy: Satan. This is to say, having given man the weapons with which to do battle with Satan, God hands man over to Satan and allows Satan to "test" man's stature. If man can break out from Satan's battle formations, if he can escape Satan's encirclement and still live, then man will have passed the test. But if

man fails to leave Satan's battle formations, and submits to Satan, then he will not have passed the test. Whatever aspect of man God examines, the criteria for His examination are whether or not man stands firm in his testimony when attacked by Satan, and whether or not he has forsaken God and surrendered and submitted to Satan while ensnared by Satan. It may be said that whether or not man can be saved depends on whether he can overcome and defeat Satan, and whether or not he can gain freedom depends on whether he is able to lift up, on his own, the weapons given to him by God to overcome Satan's bondage, making Satan completely abandon hope and leave him alone. If Satan abandons hope and relinquishes someone, this means that Satan will never again try to take this person from God, will never again accuse and interfere with this person, will never again wantonly torture or attack them; only someone such as this will truly have been gained by God. This is the entire process by which God gains people.

The Warning and Enlightenment Provided to Later Generations by Job's Testimony

At the same time as understanding the process by which God completely gains someone, people will also understand the aims and significance of God's consignment of Job to Satan. People are no longer disturbed by Job's torment, and have a new appreciation of its significance. They no longer worry about whether they themselves will be subjected to the same temptation as Job, and no longer oppose or reject the coming of God's trials. Job's faith, obedience, and his testimony to overcoming Satan have been a source of huge help and encouragement to people. In Job, they see hope for their own salvation, and see that through faith, and obedience to and fear of God, it is entirely possible to defeat Satan, to prevail over Satan. They see that as long as they acquiesce to God's sovereignty and arrangements, and as long as they possess the determination and faith not to forsake God after having lost everything, then they can bring shame and defeat upon Satan, and they see that they need only possess the determination and perseverance to stand firm in their testimony—even if it means losing their lives—for Satan to be cowed and beat a hasty retreat. Job's testimony is a warning to later generations, and this warning tells them that if they do not defeat Satan, then they will never be able to rid themselves of the accusations and interference of Satan, nor will they ever be able to escape the abuse and attacks of Satan. Job's testimony has enlightened later generations. This enlightenment teaches people that only if they are perfect and upright will they be able to fear God and shun evil; it teaches them that only if they fear God and shun evil can they bear strong and resounding testimony to God; only if they bear strong and resounding testimony to God can they never be controlled by Satan and live under the guidance and protection of God—only then will they have been truly saved. Job's personality and his life's pursuit should be emulated by everyone who pursues salvation. That which he lived out during his whole life and his conduct during his trials is a precious treasure to all those who pursue the way of fearing God and shunning evil.

Job's Testimony Brings Comfort to God

If I tell you now that Job is a lovely man, you may not be able to appreciate the meaning within these words, and may not be able to grasp the sentiment behind why I have spoken of all these things; but wait until the day when you have experienced trials the same as or akin to those of Job, when you have gone through adversity, when you have experienced trials personally arranged for you by God, when you give your all, and endure humiliation and hardship in order to prevail over Satan and bear testimony to God amid temptations—then you will be able to appreciate the meaning of these words I speak. At that time, you will feel that you are far inferior to Job, you will feel how lovely Job is, and that he is worthy of emulation. When that time comes, you will realize how important those classic words spoken by Job are for one who is corrupt and who lives in these times, and you will realize how difficult it is for the people of today to achieve what was achieved by Job. When you feel it is difficult, you will appreciate how anxious and worried is God's heart, you will appreciate how high is the price paid by God for gaining such people, and how precious is that which God does and expends for mankind. Now that you have heard these words, do you have an accurate understanding and correct assessment of Job? In your eyes, was Job a truly perfect and upright man who feared God and shunned evil? I believe that most people will most certainly say yes. For the facts of what Job acted and revealed are undeniable by any man or Satan. They are the most powerful proof of Job's triumph over Satan. This proof was produced in Job, and was the first testimony received by God. Thus, when Job triumphed in the temptations of Satan and bore testimony to God, God saw hope in Job, and His heart was comforted by Job. Since the time of creation until the time of Job, this was the first time that God truly experienced what comfort was, and what it meant to be comforted by man. It was the first time that He had seen, and gained, true testimony that was borne for Him.

I trust that, having heard of Job's testimony and accounts of the various aspects of Job, the majority of people will have plans for the path before them. So, too, do I trust that most people who are full of anxiety and fear will slowly begin to relax in both body and mind, and will begin to feel relief, little by little ...

The passages below are also accounts about Job. Let us continue reading.

4. Job Hears of God by the Hearing of the Ear

Job 9:11 See, He goes by me, and I see Him not: He passes on also, but I perceive Him not.

Job 23:8–9 Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: On the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.

Job 42:2–6 I know that You can do every thing, and that no thought can be withheld from You. Who is he that hides counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech You, and I will speak: I will demand of You, and declare You to me. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Although God Has Not Revealed Himself to Job, Job Believes in the Sovereignty of God

What is the thrust of these words? Have any of you realized that there is a fact here? First, how did Job know there is a God? Then, how did he know that the heavens and earth and all things are ruled by God? There is a passage that answers these two questions: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." From these words we learn that, rather than having seen God with his own eyes, Job had learned of God from legend. It was under these circumstances that he began to walk the path of following God, after which he confirmed the existence of God in his life, and among all things. There is an undeniable fact here—what is that fact? Despite being able to follow the way of fearing God and shunning evil, Job had never seen God. In this, was he not the same as the people of today? Job had never seen God, the implication of which is that although he had heard of God, he did not know where God was, or what God was like, or what God was doing. These are all subjective factors; objectively speaking, though he followed God, God had never appeared to him or spoken to him. Is this not a fact? Although God had not spoken to Job or given him any commands, Job had seen God's existence and beheld His sovereignty among all things, and in the legends through which Job had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, after which he began the life of fearing God and shunning evil. Such were the origins and process by which Job followed God. But no matter how he feared God and shunned evil, no matter how he held firm to his integrity, still God never appeared to him. Let us read this passage. He said, "See, He goes by me, and I see Him not: He passes on also, but I perceive Him not" (Job 9:11). What these words are saying is that Job might have felt God around him or he might not—but he had never been able to see God. There were times when he imagined God passing before him, or acting, or guiding man, but he had never known. God comes upon man when he is not expecting it; man does not know when God comes upon him, or where He comes upon him, because man cannot see God, and thus, to man, God is hidden from him.

Job's Faith in God Is Not Shaken by the Fact That God Is Hidden From Him

In the following passage of scripture, Job then says, "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: On the left hand, where He does

work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him" (Job 23:8–9). In this account, we learn that in Job's experiences, God had been hidden to him throughout; God had not openly appeared to him, nor had He openly spoken any words to him, yet in his heart, Job was confident of God's existence. He had always believed that God might be walking before him, or might be acting by his side, and that although he could not see God, God was next to him, governing everything about him. Job had never seen God, but he was able to stay true to his faith, which no other person was able to do. Why could other people not do that? It is because God did not speak to Job or appear to him, and if he had not truly believed, he could not have gone on, nor could he have held fast to the way of fearing God and shunning evil. Is this not true? How do you feel when you read of Job saying these words? Do you feel that Job's perfection and uprightness, and his righteousness before God, are true, and not an exaggeration on the part of God? Even though God treated Job the same as other people and did not appear or speak to him, Job still held firm to his integrity, still believed in God's sovereignty, and, furthermore, he frequently offered burnt offerings and prayed before God as a result of his fear of offending God. In Job's ability to fear God without having seen God, we see how much he loved positive things, and how firm and real his faith was. He did not deny the existence of God because God was hidden from him, nor did he lose his faith and forsake God because he had never seen Him. Instead, amid God's hidden work of ruling all things, he had realized the existence of God, and felt the sovereignty and power of God. He did not give up on being upright because God was hidden, nor did he forsake the way of fearing God and shunning evil because God had never appeared to him. Job had never asked that God openly appear to him to prove His existence, for he had already beheld God's sovereignty among all things, and he believed that he had gained the blessings and graces that others had not gained. Although God remained hidden to him, Job's faith in God was never shaken. Thus, he harvested what none other had: God's approval and God's blessing.

Job Blesses the Name of God and Does Not Think of Blessings or Disaster

There is a fact which is never referred to in the Scriptures' stories of Job, and this fact will be our focus today. Although Job had never seen God or heard the words of God with his own ears, God had a place in Job's heart. What was Job's attitude toward God? It was, as previously referred to, "blessed be the name of Jehovah." His blessing of God's name was unconditional, irrespective of context, and bound to no reason. We see that Job had given his heart to God, allowing it to be controlled by God; all that he thought, all that he decided, and all that he planned in his heart was laid open to God and not closed off from God. His heart did not stand in opposition to God, and he had never asked God to do anything for him or give him anything, and he did not harbor extravagant desires that he would gain anything from his worship of God. Job did not

talk of trades with God, and made no requests or demands of God. His praising of God's name was because of the great power and authority of God in ruling all things, and it was not dependent on whether he gained blessings or was struck by disaster. He believed that regardless of whether God blesses people or brings disaster upon them, God's power and authority will not change, and thus, regardless of a person's circumstances, God's name should be praised. That man is blessed by God is because of God's sovereignty, and when disaster befalls man, so, too, it is because of God's sovereignty. God's power and authority rule over and arrange everything about man; the vagaries of man's fortune are the manifestation of God's power and authority, and regardless of one's viewpoint, God's name should be praised. This is what Job experienced and came to know during the years of his life. All of Job's thoughts and actions reached the ears of God and arrived before God, and were seen as important by God. God cherished this knowledge of Job, and treasured Job for having such a heart. This heart awaited God's command always, and in all places, and no matter what the time or place it welcomed whatever befell him. Job made no demands of God. What he demanded of himself was to wait for, accept, face, and obey all of the arrangements that came from God; Job believed this to be his duty, and it was precisely what was wanted by God. Job had never seen God, nor heard Him speak any words, issue any commands, give any teachings, or instruct him of anything. In the words of today, for him to be able to possess such a knowledge and attitude toward God when God had given him no enlightenment, guidance, or provision with regard to the truth—this was precious, and for him to demonstrate such things was enough for God, and his testimony was commended and cherished by God. Job had never seen God or heard God personally utter any teachings to him, but to God his heart and he himself were far more precious than those people who, before God, were only able to talk in terms of deep theory, who were only able to boast, and speak of offering sacrifices, but who had never had a true knowledge of God, and had never truly feared God. For Job's heart was pure, and not hidden from God, and his humanity was honest and kind-hearted, and he loved justice and that which was positive. Only a man like this who was possessed of such a heart and humanity was able to follow the way of God, and capable of fearing God and shunning evil. Such a man could see God's sovereignty, could see His authority and power, and was able to achieve obedience to His sovereignty and arrangements. Only a man such as this could truly praise God's name. That is because he did not look at whether God would bless him or bring disaster upon him, because he knew that everything is controlled by the hand of God, and that for man to worry is a sign of foolishness, ignorance, and irrationality, of doubt toward the fact of God's sovereignty over all things, and of not fearing God. Job's knowledge was precisely what God wanted. So, did Job have a greater theoretical knowledge of God than you? Because God's work and utterances at that time were few, it was no easy matter to achieve the knowledge of God. Such an accomplishment by Job was no mean feat. He had not experienced the

work of God, nor ever heard God speaking, nor seen the face of God. That he was able to have such an attitude toward God was entirely the result of his humanity and his personal pursuit, a humanity and pursuit that are not possessed by people today. Thus, in that age, God said, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man." In that age, God had already made such an assessment of him, and had come to such a conclusion. How much more true would it be today?

Although God Is Hidden From Man, His Deeds Among All Things Are Sufficient for Man to Know Him

Job had not seen the face of God or heard the words spoken by God, and much less had he personally experienced the work of God, yet his fear of God and his testimony during his trials are witnessed by all, and they are loved, delighted in, and commended by God, and people envy, and admire them, and even more than that, sing their praises. There was nothing great or extraordinary about his life: Just like any ordinary person, he lived an unremarkable life, going out to work at sunrise and returning home to rest at sunset. The difference is that during the several unremarkable decades of his life, he gained an insight into the way of God, and realized and understood the great power and sovereignty of God as no other person ever had. He was no cleverer than any ordinary person, his life was not especially tenacious, nor, moreover, did he have invisible special skills. What he did possess, though, was a personality that was honest, kind-hearted, and upright, a personality which loved fairness, righteousness, and positive things none of these things are possessed by the majority of ordinary people. He differentiated between love and hate, had a sense of justice, was unyielding and persistent, and paid meticulous attention to detail in his thinking. Thus, during his unremarkable time on earth he saw all the extraordinary things that God had done, and he saw the greatness, holiness, and righteousness of God, he saw God's concern, graciousness, and protection for man, and he saw the honorableness and authority of the supreme God. The first reason why Job was able to gain these things that were beyond any normal person was because he had a pure heart, and his heart belonged to God, and was led by the Creator. The second reason was his pursuit: his pursuit of being impeccable and perfect, and of being someone who complied with the will of Heaven, who was loved by God, and who shunned evil. Job possessed and pursued these things while being unable to see God or hear the words of God; though he had never seen God, he had come to know the means by which God rules over all things, and he understood the wisdom with which God does so. Though he had never heard the words spoken by God, Job knew that the deeds of rewarding man and taking from man all come from God. Although the years of his life were no different from those of any ordinary person, he did not allow the unremarkableness of his life to affect his knowledge of God's sovereignty over all things, or to affect his following of the way of fearing God and shunning evil. In his eyes, the laws of all things were full of God's deeds, and God's sovereignty could be seen in any

part of a person's life. He had not seen God, but he was able to realize that God's deeds are everywhere, and during his unremarkable time on earth, in every corner of his life he was able to see and realize the extraordinary and wondrous deeds of God, and he could see the wondrous arrangements of God. The hiddenness and silence of God did not hinder Job's realization of God's deeds, nor did they affect his knowledge of God's sovereignty over all things. His life was the realization, during his everyday life, of the sovereignty and arrangements of God, who is hidden among all things. In his everyday life he also heard and understood the voice of God's heart and the words of God, who is silent among all things yet expresses the voice of His heart and His words by governing the laws of all things. You see, then, that if people have the same humanity and pursuit as Job, then they can gain the same realization and knowledge as Job, and can acquire the same understanding and knowledge of God's sovereignty over all things as Job. God had not appeared to Job or spoken to him, but Job was able to be perfect and upright, and to fear God and shun evil. In other words, without God having appeared to or spoken to man, God's deeds among all things and His sovereignty over all things are sufficient for man to become aware of God's existence, power, and authority, and God's power and authority are enough to make man follow the way of fearing God and shunning evil. Since an ordinary man such as Job was able to achieve fear of God and shunning of evil, then every ordinary person who follows God should also be able to. Though these words may sound like logical inference, this does not contravene the laws of things. Yet the facts have not matched up to expectations: Fearing God and shunning evil, it would appear, is the preserve of Job and Job alone. At the mention of "fearing God and shunning evil," people think that this should only be done by Job, as if the way of fearing God and shunning evil had been labeled with the name of Job and had nothing to do with other people. The reason for this is clear: Because only Job was possessed of a personality that was honest, kind-hearted, and upright, and which loved fairness and righteousness and things that were positive, thus only Job could follow the way of fearing God and shunning evil. You must have all understood the implication here because no one is possessed of a humanity that is honest, kind-hearted, and upright, and which loves fairness and righteousness and that which is positive, no one can fear God and shun evil, and thus people can never gain God's joy or stand firm amid trials. This also means that, with the exception of Job, all people are still bound and ensnared by Satan; they are all accused, attacked, and abused by it. They are the ones Satan tries to swallow, and they are all without freedom, prisoners that have been taken captive by Satan.

If Man's Heart Is in Enmity to God, How Can Man Fear God and Shun Evil?

Since the people of today do not possess the same humanity as Job, what of their nature and essence, and their attitude toward God? Do they fear God? Do they shun

evil? Those who do not fear God or shun evil can only be summed up with three words: "enemies of God." You often say these three words, but you have never known their real meaning. The words "enemies of God" have essence: They are not saying that God sees man as the enemy, but that man sees God as the enemy. First, when people begin to believe in God, which of them does not have their own aims, motivations, and ambitions? Even though one part of them believes in the existence of God and has seen the existence of God, their belief in God still contains those motivations, and their ultimate aim in believing in God is to receive His blessings and the things they want. In people's life experiences, they often think to themselves: "I've given up my family and career for God, and what has He given me? I must add it up, and confirm it—have I received any blessings recently? I've given a lot during this time, I've run and run, and have suffered much—has God given me any promises in return? Has He remembered my good deeds? What will my end be? Can I receive God's blessings? ..." Every person constantly makes such calculations within their heart, and they make demands of God which bear their motivations, ambitions, and a transactional mentality. This is to say, in his heart man is constantly testing God, constantly devising plans about God, constantly arguing the case for his own individual end with God, and trying to extract a statement from God, seeing whether or not God can give him what he wants. At the same time as pursuing God, man does not treat God as God. Man has always tried to make deals with God, ceaselessly making demands of Him, and even pressing Him at every step, trying to take a mile after being given an inch. At the same time as trying to make deals with God, man also argues with Him, and there are even people who, when trials befall them or they find themselves in certain situations, often become weak, passive and slack in their work, and full of complaints about God. From the time when man first began to believe in God, he has considered God to be a cornucopia, a Swiss Army knife, and he has considered himself to be God's greatest creditor, as if trying to get blessings and promises from God were his inherent right and obligation, while God's responsibility were to protect and care for man, and to provide for him. Such is the basic understanding of "belief in God" of all those who believe in God, and such is their deepest understanding of the concept of belief in God. From man's nature and essence to his subjective pursuit, there is nothing that relates to the fear of God. Man's aim in believing in God could not possibly have anything to do with the worship of God. That is to say, man has never considered nor understood that belief in God requires fearing and worshiping God. In light of such conditions, man's essence is obvious. What is this essence? It is that man's heart is malicious, harbors treachery and deceit, does not love fairness and righteousness and that which is positive, and it is contemptible and greedy. Man's heart could not be more closed to God; he has not given it to God at all. God has never seen man's true heart, nor has He ever been worshiped by man. No matter how great the price God pays, or how much work He does, or how much He provides to man, man remains blind and utterly indifferent to it all. Man has never given his heart to God, he

only wants to mind his heart himself, to make his own decisions—the subtext of which is that man does not want to follow the way of fearing God and shunning evil, or to obey the sovereignty and arrangements of God, nor does he want to worship God as God. Such is the state of man today. Now let us look again at Job. First of all, did he do a deal with God? Did he have any ulterior motives in holding firm to the way of fearing God and shunning evil? At that time, had God spoken to anyone of the end to come? At that time, God had not made promises to anyone about the end, and it was against this background that Job was able to fear God and shun evil. Do the people of today stand up to comparison with Job? There is too much of a disparity; they are in different leagues. Although Job did not have much knowledge of God, he had given his heart to God and it belonged to God. He never did a deal with God, and had no extravagant desires or demands toward God; instead, he believed that "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away." This was what he had seen and obtained from holding true to the way of fearing God and shunning evil during many years of life. Likewise, he had also gained the outcome represented in the words: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" These two sentences were what he had seen and come to know as a result of his attitude of obedience toward God during his life's experiences, and they were also his most powerful weapons with which he triumphed during Satan's temptations, and they were the foundation of his standing firm in testimony to God. At this point, do you envisage Job as a lovely person? Do you hope to be such a person? Do you fear having to undergo the temptations of Satan? Do you resolve to pray for God to subject you to the same trials as Job? Without doubt, most people would not dare to pray for such things. It is evident, then, that your faith is pitiably small; compared to Job, your faith is simply unworthy of mention. You are the enemies of God, you do not fear God, you are incapable of standing firm in your testimony to God, and you are unable to triumph over the attacks, accusations, and temptations of Satan. What makes you qualified to receive the promises of God? Having heard the story of Job and understood God's intention in saving man and the meaning of the salvation of man, do you now have the faith to accept the same trials as Job? Should you not have a little resolve to allow yourselves to follow the way of fearing God and shunning evil?

Have No Misgivings About the Trials of God

After receiving testimony from Job following the end of his trials, God resolved that He would gain a group—or more than a group—of people like Job, yet He resolved to never again allow Satan to attack or abuse any other person using the means by which it had tempted, attacked, and abused Job, by betting with God; God did not permit Satan to ever again do such things to man, who is weak, foolish, and ignorant—it was enough that Satan had tempted Job! Not permitting Satan to abuse people howsoever it wishes is the mercy of God. For God, it was enough that Job had suffered the temptation and abuse of Satan. God did not permit Satan to ever again do such things, for the lives and

everything of people who follow God are ruled and orchestrated by God, and Satan is not entitled to manipulate God's chosen ones at will—you should be clear about this point! God cares about man's weakness, and understands his foolishness and ignorance. Although, in order that man could be completely saved, God has to hand him over to Satan, God is not willing to see man ever played for a fool and abused by Satan, and He does not want to see man always suffering. Man was created by God, and that God rules and arranges everything about man is ordained by Heaven and acknowledged by earth; this is the responsibility of God, and it is the authority by which God rules all things! God does not permit Satan to abuse and mistreat man at will, He does not permit Satan to employ various means to lead man astray, and, moreover, He does not permit Satan to intervene in God's sovereignty of man, nor does He allow Satan to trample and destroy the laws by which God rules all things, to say nothing of God's great work of managing and saving mankind! Those whom God wishes to save, and those who are able to bear testimony to God, are the core and the crystallization of the work of God's six-thousand-year management plan, as well as the price of His efforts in His six thousand years of work. How could God casually give these people to Satan?

People often worry about and are fearful of the trials of God, yet at all times they are living in Satan's snare, and living in perilous territory in which they are attacked and abused by Satan—yet they know not fear, and are unperturbed. What is going on? Man's faith in God is only limited to the things he can see. He has not the slightest appreciation of God's love and concern for man, or of His tenderness and consideration toward man. But for a little trepidation and fear about God's trials, judgment and chastisement, and majesty and wrath, man has not the slightest understanding of God's good intentions. At the mention of trials, people feel as if God has ulterior motives, and some even believe that God harbors evil designs, unaware of what God will actually do to them; thus, at the same time as crying out obedience to God's sovereignty and arrangements, they do all they can to resist and oppose God's sovereignty over man and arrangements for man, for they believe that if they are not careful they will be misled by God, that if they do not keep a grip on their own fate then all that they have could be taken by God, and their life could even be ended. Man is in Satan's camp, but he never worries about being abused by Satan, and he is abused by Satan but never fears being taken captive by Satan. He keeps saying that he accepts God's salvation, yet has never trusted in God or believed that God will truly save man from the claws of Satan. If, like Job, man is able to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and can give his entire being to the hands of God, then will man's end not be the same as Job's—the receipt of God's blessings? If man is able to accept and submit to God's rule, what is there to lose? Thus, I suggest that you be careful in your actions, and cautious toward everything that is about to come upon you. Do not be rash or impulsive, and do not treat God and the people, matters, and objects He has arranged for you depending on your hot blood or your naturalness, or according to your imaginations and notions; you must be cautious in your actions, and

must pray and seek more, to avoid inciting the wrath of God. Remember this! Next, we will look at how Job was after his trials.

5. Job After His Trials

Job 42:7–9 And it was so, that after Jehovah had spoken these words to Job, Jehovah said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends: for you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has. Therefore take to you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as Jehovah commanded them: Jehovah also accepted Job.

Job 42:10 And Jehovah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Job 42:12 So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

Job 42:17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

Those Who Fear God and Shun Evil Are Looked Upon With Cherishment by God, While Those Who Are Foolish Are Seen as Lowly by God

In Job 42:7-9, God says that Job is His servant. His use of the term "servant" to refer to Job demonstrates Job's importance in His heart; though God did not call Job something more esteemed, this appellation had no bearing on Job's importance within God's heart. "Servant" here is God's nickname for Job. God's multiple references to "My servant Job" show how He was pleased with Job. Although God did not speak of the meaning behind the word "servant," God's definition of the word "servant" can be seen from His words in this passage of scripture. God first said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends: for you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has." These words are the first time that God had openly told people that He accepted all that was said and done by Job after God's trials of him, and are the first time that He had openly confirmed the accuracy and correctness of all that Job had done and said. God was angry at Eliphaz and the others because of their incorrect, absurd discourse, because, like Job, they could not see the appearance of God or hear the words He spoke in their lives, yet Job had such an accurate knowledge of God, whereas they could only blindly guess about God, violating God's will and trying His patience in all that they did. Consequently, at the same time as accepting all that was done and said by Job, God grew wrathful toward the others, for in them He was not only unable to see any reality of fear of God, but also heard nothing of the fear of God in what they said. And so God next made the

following demands of them: "Therefore take to you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly." In this passage God is telling Eliphaz and the others to do something that will redeem their sins, for their folly was a sin against Jehovah God, and thus they had to make burnt offerings in order to remedy their mistakes. Burnt offerings are often offered to God, but what is unusual about these burnt offerings is that they were offered to Job. Job was accepted by God because he bore testimony to God during his trials. These friends of Job, meanwhile, were exposed during the time of his trials; because of their folly, they were condemned by God, and they incited the wrath of God, and should be punished by God—punished by making burnt offerings before Job—after which Job prayed for them to dispel God's punishment and wrath toward them. God's intention was to bring shame upon them, for they were not people who feared God and shunned evil, and they had condemned the integrity of Job. In one regard, God was telling them that He did not accept their actions, but greatly accepted and took delight in Job; in another, God was telling them that being accepted by God elevates man before God, that man is loathed by God because of his folly, and offends God because of it, and is lowly and vile in God's eyes. These are the definitions given by God of two types of people, they are God's attitudes toward these two types of people, and they are God's articulation of the worth and standing of these two types of people. Even though God called Job His servant, in God's eyes this servant was beloved, and was bestowed with the authority to pray for others and forgive them their mistakes. This servant was able to talk directly to God and come directly before God, and his status was higher and more honorable than those of others. This is the true meaning of the word "servant" spoken by God. Job was given this special honor because of his fear of God and shunning of evil, and the reason why others were not called servants by God is because they did not fear God and shun evil. These two distinctly different attitudes of God are His attitudes toward two types of people: Those who fear God and shun evil are accepted by God and seen as precious in His eyes, while those who are foolish do not fear God, are incapable of shunning evil, and are not able to receive God's favor; they are often loathed and condemned by God, and are lowly in God's eyes.

God Bestows Authority Upon Job

Job prayed for his friends, and afterward, because of Job's prayers, God did not deal with them as befitted their folly—He did not punish them or take any retribution upon them. Why was that? It was because the prayers made for them by God's servant, Job, had reached His ears; God forgave them because He accepted Job's prayers. So, what do we see in this? When God blesses someone, He gives them many rewards, and not just material ones: God also gives them authority, entitles them to pray for others, and God forgets and overlooks those people's transgressions, because He hears these

prayers. This is the very authority that God gave to Job. Through Job's prayers to halt their condemnation, Jehovah God brought shame upon those foolish people—which, of course, was His special punishment for Eliphaz and the others.

Job Is Once More Blessed by God, and Is Never Again Accused by Satan

Among the utterances of Jehovah God are the words that "you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has." What was it that Job had said? It was what we talked about previously, as well as the many pages of words in the Book of Job that Job is recorded as having spoken. In all of these many pages of words, Job never once has any complaints or misgivings about God. He simply awaits the outcome. It is this waiting which is his attitude of obedience, as a result of which, and as a result of the words he said to God, Job was accepted by God. When he endured trials and suffered hardship, God was by his side, and although his hardship was not lessened by God's presence, God saw what He wished to see, and heard what He wished to hear. Every one of Job's actions and words reached the eyes and ears of God; God heard, and He saw—this is fact. Job's knowledge of God, and his thoughts about God in his heart at that time, during that period, were not actually as specific as those of the people of today, but in the context of the time, God still recognized all that he had said, because his behavior and the thoughts in his heart, as well as what he had expressed and revealed, were sufficient for His requirements. During the time that Job was subjected to trials, that which he thought in his heart and resolved to do showed God an outcome, one that was satisfactory to God, and after this God took away Job's trials, Job emerged from his troubles, and his trials were gone and never again befell him. Because Job had already been subjected to trials, and had stood firm during these trials, and completely triumphed over Satan, God gave him the blessings that he so rightfully deserved. As recorded in Job 42:10, 12, Job was blessed once again, and was blessed with more than he had been in the first instance. At this time Satan had withdrawn, and no longer said or did anything, and from then onward Job was no longer interfered with or attacked by Satan, and Satan no longer made accusations against God's blessings of Job.

Job Spends the Latter Half of His Life Amid God's Blessings

Although His blessings of that time were only limited to sheep, cattle, camels, material assets, and so on, the blessings that God wished to bestow upon Job in His heart were far more than this. At the time, were there recorded what kind of eternal promises God wished to give Job? In His blessings of Job, God did not mention or touch upon his end, and regardless of what importance or position Job held within God's heart, in sum God was very measured in His blessings. God did not announce Job's end. What does this mean? At that time, when God's plan had yet to reach the point of the proclamation of man's end, the plan had yet to enter the final stage of His work, God made no mention of the end, merely bestowing material blessings upon man. What this

means is that the latter half of Job's life was passed amid God's blessings, which was what made him different to other people—but like them he aged, and like any normal person the day came when he said goodbye to the world. Thus is it recorded that "So Job died, being old and full of days" (Job 42:17). What is the meaning of "died full of days" here? In the era before God proclaimed people's end, God set a life expectancy for Job, and when that age had been reached He allowed Job to naturally depart from this world. From Job's second blessing until his death, God did not add any more hardship. To God, Job's death was natural, and also necessary; it was something very normal, and neither a judgment nor a condemnation. While he was alive, Job worshiped and feared God; with regard to what sort of end he had following his death, God said nothing, nor made any comment about it. God has a strong sense of propriety in what He says and does, and the content and principles of His words and actions are in accordance with the stage of His work and the period in which He is working. What kind of end did someone such as Job have in God's heart? Had God reached any kind of decision in His heart? Of course He had! It is just that this was unknown by man; God did not want to tell man, nor did He have any intention of telling man. Thus, superficially speaking, Job died full of days, and such was the life of Job.

The Price Lived Out by Job During His Lifetime

Did Job live a life of value? Where was the value? Why is it said that he lived a life of value? To man, what was his value? From the viewpoint of man, he represented the mankind whom God wishes to save, in bearing a resounding testimony to God before Satan and the people of the world. He fulfilled the duty that ought to be fulfilled by a creature of God, set an exemplar, and acted as a model for all those whom God wishes to save, allowing people to see that it is entirely possible to triumph over Satan by relying on God. What was his value to God? To God, the value of Job's life lay in his ability to fear God, worship God, testify to the deeds of God, and praise the deeds of God, bringing God comfort and something to enjoy; to God, the value of Job's life was also in how, before his death, Job experienced trials and triumphed over Satan, and bore resounding testimony to God before Satan and the people of the world, so that God gained glory among mankind, comforting His heart and allowing His eager heart to behold an outcome and see hope. His testimony set a precedent for the ability to stand firm in one's testimony to God, and for being able to shame Satan on behalf of God, in God's work of managing mankind. Is this not the value of Job's life? Job brought comfort to God's heart, he gave God a foretaste of the delight of gaining glory, and provided a wonderful beginning for God's management plan. From this point onward, the name of Job became a symbol of God's gaining glory, and a sign of mankind's triumph over Satan. What Job lived out during his lifetime, as well as his remarkable triumph over Satan will forever be cherished by God, and his perfection, uprightness, and fear of God will be venerated and emulated by generations to come. He will forever be cherished by God like a flawless, luminous pearl, and so too is he worth treasuring by man! Next, let us look at God's work during the Age of Law.

D. The Regulations of the Age of Law

The Ten Commandments

The Principles for Building Altars

Regulations for the Treatment of Servants

Regulations for Theft and Compensation

Keeping the Sabbath Year and the Three Feasts

Regulations for the Sabbath Day

Regulations for Offerings

Burnt Offerings

Grain Offerings

Peace Offerings

Sin Offerings

Trespass Offerings

Regulations for Offerings by Priests (Aaron and His Sons Are Ordered to Comply)

Burnt Offerings by Priests

Grain Offerings by Priests

Sin Offerings by Priests

Trespass Offerings by Priests

Peace Offerings by Priests

Regulations for the Eating of Offerings by Priests

Clean and Unclean Animals (Those Which Can and Cannot Be Eaten)

Regulations for the Purification of Women Following Childbirth

Standards for the Examination of Leprosy

Regulations for Those Who Have Been Healed of Leprosy

Regulations for Cleansing Infected Houses

Regulations for Those Suffering From Abnormal Discharges

The Day of Atonement That Must Be Observed Once a Year

Rules for the Slaughtering of Cattle and Sheep

The Prohibition of Following Detestable Practices of Gentiles (Not Committing Incest, and So On)

Regulations That Must Be Followed by the People ("You shall be holy: for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev 19:2))

The Execution of Those Who Sacrifice Their Children to Molech

Regulations for the Punishment of the Crime of Adultery

Rules That Should Be Observed by Priests (Rules for Their Everyday Behavior, Rules for the Consumption of Holy Things, Rules for Making Offerings, and So On)

Feasts That Should Be Observed (the Sabbath Day, Passover, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, and So On)

Other Regulations (Burning the Lamps, the Year of Jubilee, the Redemption of the Land, Making Vows, the Offering of Tithes, and So On)

The Regulations of the Age of Law Are the Real Proof of God's Direction of All Mankind

So, you have read these regulations and principles of the Age of Law, have you? Do the regulations encompass a broad range? First, they cover the Ten Commandments, after which are the regulations for how to build altars, and so on. These are followed by regulations for keeping the Sabbath and observing the three feasts, after which are the regulations for offerings. Did you see how many types of offerings there are? There are burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and so on. They are followed by regulations for priests' offerings, including burnt offerings and grain offerings by priests, and other kinds of offerings. The eighth set of regulations is for the eating of offerings by priests. Then there are regulations for what should be observed during people's lives. There are stipulations for many aspects of people's lives, such as the regulations for what they may or may not eat, for the purification of women following childbirth, and for those who have been healed of leprosy. In these regulations, God goes so far as to speak about disease, and there are even rules for the slaughter of sheep and cattle, and so on. Sheep and cattle were created by God, and you should slaughter them however God tells you to; there is, without doubt, reason to God's words; it is undoubtedly right to act as decreed by God, and surely of benefit to people! There are also feasts and rules to be observed, such as the Sabbath day, Passover, and more—God spoke of all of these. Let us look at the final ones: other regulations—burning the lamps, the year of jubilee, the redemption of the land, making vows, the offering of tithes, and so on. Do these encompass a broad range? The first thing to be talked of is the issue of people's offerings. Then there are regulations for theft and compensation, and the observation of the Sabbath day...; every one of life's details is involved. This is to say, when God began the official work of His management plan, He set down many regulations that were to be followed by man. These regulations were in order to allow man to lead the normal life of man on earth, a normal life of man that is inseparable from God and His guidance. God first told man how to make altars, how to set up the altars. After that, He told man how to make offerings, and established how man was to live what he was to pay attention to in life, what he was to abide by, and what he should and should not do. What God set out for man was all-embracing, and with these customs, regulations, and principles He standardized people's behavior, guided their lives, guided their initiation to the laws of God, guided them to come before the altar of God, guided them in having a life among all the things God had made for man that was possessed of order, regularity, and moderation. God first used these simple regulations and principles to set limits for man, so that on earth man would have a normal life of worshiping God, would have the normal life of man; such is the specific content of the beginning of His six-thousand-year management plan. The regulations and rules cover a very broad content, they are the specifics of God's guidance of mankind during the Age of Law, they had to be accepted and obeyed by the people who came before the Age of Law, they are a record of the work done by God during the Age of Law, and they are real proof of God's leadership and guidance of all mankind.

Mankind Is Forever Inseparable From God's Teachings and Provisions

In these regulations we see that God's attitude toward His work, toward His management, and toward mankind is serious, conscientious, rigorous, and responsible. He does the work He must do among mankind according to His steps, without the slightest discrepancy, speaking the words that He must speak to mankind without the slightest error or omission, allowing man to see that he is inseparable from God's leadership, and showing him just how important all that God does and says is to mankind. Regardless of what man is like in the next age, at the very beginning—during the Age of Law—God did these simple things. To God, people's concepts of God, the world, and mankind in that age were abstract and opaque, and even though they had some conscious ideas and intentions, all of them were unclear and incorrect, and thus mankind was inseparable from God's teachings and provisions for them. Earliest mankind knew nothing, and so God had to begin teaching man from the most superficial and basic principles for survival and regulations necessary for living, imbuing these things in the heart of man bit by bit. Through these rules, which were of words, and through these regulations, He gave man a gradual understanding of Him, a gradual appreciation and understanding of His leadership, and a basic concept of the relationship between Him and man. After achieving this effect, only then was God able to, little by little, do the work that He would do later. Thus, these regulations and the work done by God during the Age of Law are the bedrock of His work of saving mankind, and the first stage of work in God's management plan. Although, prior to the work of the Age of Law, God had spoken to Adam, Eve, and their descendants, those commands and teachings were not so systematic or specific as to be issued one by one to man, and they were not written down, nor did they become regulations. That is because, at that time, God's plan had not gone that far, only when God had led man to this step could He begin speaking these regulations of the Age of Law, and begin making man carry them out. It was a necessary process, and the outcome was inevitable. These simple customs and regulations show man the steps of God's management work and the wisdom of God revealed in His management plan. God knows what content and means to use to begin, what means to use to continue, and what means to use to end in order that He could gain a group of people who bear testimony to Him, and that He could gain a group of people that are of the same mind as Him. He knows what is within man, and knows what

is lacking in man. He knows what He has to provide, and how He should lead man, and so too does He know what man should and should not do. Man is like a puppet: Even though he had no understanding of God's will, he couldn't help but be led by God's work of management, step by step, up to today. There was no haziness in God's heart about what He was to do; in His heart there was a very clear and vivid plan, and He carried out the work that He Himself wished to do according to His steps and His plan, progressing from the superficial to the profound. Even though He had not indicated the work that He was to do later, His subsequent work still continued to be carried out and to progress in strict accordance with His plan, which is a manifestation of what God has and is, and is also the authority of God. Regardless of which stage of His management plan He is working in, His disposition and His essence represent Himself. This is absolutely true. Regardless of the age, or the stage of work, there are things that will never change: what kind of people God loves, what kind of people He loathes, His disposition and all that He has and is. Even though these regulations and principles that God established during the work of the Age of Law seem very simple and superficial to people today, and even though they are easy to understand and achieve, in them there is still the wisdom of God, and there is still the disposition of God and what He has and is. For within these apparently simple regulations are expressed God's responsibility and care toward mankind, as well as the exquisite essence of His thoughts, thus allowing man to truly realize the fact that God rules over all things and all things are controlled by His hand. No matter how much knowledge mankind masters, or how many theories or mysteries he understands, to God none of these is capable of replacing His provision to, and leadership of mankind; mankind will forever be inseparable from God's guidance and the personal work of God. Such is the inseparable relationship between man and God. Regardless of whether God gives you a commandment, or a regulation, or provides truth for you to understand His will, no matter what He does, God's aim is to guide man to a beautiful tomorrow. The words uttered by God and the work He does are both the revelation of one aspect of His essence, and the revelation of one aspect of His disposition and His wisdom; they are an indispensable step of His management plan. This must not be overlooked! God's will is in whatever He does; God does not fear misplaced remarks, nor is He afraid of any of man's notions or thoughts about Him. He merely does His work and continues His management in accordance with His management plan, unconstrained by any person, matter, or object.

Good. That will be all for today. See you next time!

November 9, 2013

God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself III

Our past few fellowships have had a big impact on every one of you. As of now, people can finally really feel the true existence of God and that God is actually very close to man. Although people may have believed in God for many years, they have never truly understood His thoughts and ideas as they do now, neither have they truly experienced His practical deeds as they do now. Whether it be knowledge or actual practice, most people have learned something new and achieved a higher understanding, and they have realized the error in their own past pursuits, realized the superficiality of their experience and that too much of their experience is not in line with God's will, and realized that what man most lacks is knowledge of God's disposition. This knowledge on man's part is merely a type of perception-based knowledge; to rise to the level of rational knowledge requires a gradual deepening and strengthening through one's experiences. Before man truly understands God, subjectively it could be said that they do believe in the existence of God in their hearts, but they have no real understanding of specific questions such as what kind of God He actually is, what His will is, what His disposition is, and what His real attitude toward mankind is. This greatly compromises people's faith in God, preventing their faith from ever achieving purity or perfection. Even if you are face to face with God's word, or feel that you have encountered God through your experiences, it still cannot be said that you completely understand Him. Because you do not know God's thoughts, or what He loves and what He hates, what makes Him angry and what brings Him joy, you therefore do not have a true understanding of Him. Your faith is built on a foundation of vagueness and imagination, based on your subjective desires. It is still far from an authentic belief, and you are still far from being a true follower. Explanations of the examples from these Bible stories have allowed humans to know God's heart, what He was thinking at every step in His work and why He did this work, what His original intention and His plan were when He did it, how He achieved His ideas, and how He prepared for and developed His plan. Through these stories, we can gain a detailed, specific understanding of God's every specific intention and every real thought during His six thousand years of management work, and His attitude toward humans at different times and in different eras. If people can understand what God was thinking, what His attitude was, and the disposition He revealed as He faced every situation, this can help every person to more deeply realize God's true existence, and more deeply feel His practicality and authenticity. My goal in telling these stories is not for people to understand biblical history, nor is it to help them become familiar with the verses of the Bible or the people in it, and it is especially not to help people understand the background of what God did during the Age of Law. Rather it is to help people understand God's will, His disposition, and every little part of Him, and gain a more authentic and more accurate understanding and knowledge of God. This way, people's

hearts can, little by little, open up to God, become close to God, and they can better understand Him, His disposition, His essence, and better know the true God Himself.

Knowledge of God's disposition and what He has and is can have a positive impact on people. It can help them have more confidence in God and help them achieve true obedience and fear for Him. Then, they will no longer blindly follow or worship Him. God does not want fools or those who follow a crowd blindly, but rather a group of people who have in their hearts a clear understanding and knowledge of God's disposition and can act as God's witnesses, people who, because of His loveliness, because of what He has and is, and because of His righteous disposition, would never abandon God. As a follower of God, if in your heart there is still a lack of clarity, or there is ambiguousness or confusion about God's true existence. His disposition, what He has and is, and His plan to save mankind, then your faith cannot gain God's praise. God does not want this type of person to follow Him, and He does not like this type of person coming before Him. Because this kind of person does not understand God, they are unable to give their heart to God—their heart is closed to Him, so their faith in God is full of impurities. Their following of God can only be called blind. People can only gain true belief and be true followers if they have true understanding and knowledge of God, which engenders within them true obedience and fear of God. Only in this way can they give their heart to God and open it up to Him. This is what God wants, because everything they do and think can withstand God's test and can bear witness to God. Everything I communicate to you regarding God's disposition, or what He has and is, or His will and His thoughts in everything that He does, and from whichever perspective, from whichever angle I talk about it, it is all to help you be more certain of God's true existence, more truly understand and appreciate His love for mankind, and more truly understand and appreciate God's concern for people, and His sincere desire to manage and save mankind.

A Review of God's Thoughts, Ideas, and Actions Since His Creation of the World

Today we will first summarize God's thoughts, ideas, and His each and every move since He created mankind. We will take a look at what work He has carried out, from creating the world to the official start of the Age of Grace. We can then discover which of God's thoughts and ideas are unknown to man, and from there we can clarify the order of God's management plan, and thoroughly understand the context in which God created His management work, its source and development process, and also thoroughly understand what results He wants from His management work—that is, the core and the purpose of His management work. To understand these things we need to go back to a distant, still and silent time when there were no humans ...

God Personally Creates the First Living Person

When God arose from His bed, the first thought that He had was this: to create a living person—a real, living human—someone to live with and be His constant companion; this person could listen to Him, and He could confide in and speak with him. Then, for the first time, God scooped up a handful of dirt and used it to create the very first living person according to the image that He had imagined in His mind, and then He gave this living creature a name—Adam. Once God had this living and breathing person, how did He feel? For the first time, He felt the joy of having a loved one, a companion. He also felt for the first time the responsibility of being a father and the concern that comes along with it. This living and breathing person brought God happiness and joy: He felt comforted for the first time. This was the first thing God had ever done that was not accomplished with His thoughts or even words, but was done with His own hands. When this kind of being—a living and breathing person—stood in front of God, made of flesh and blood, with body and form, and able to speak with God, He experienced a kind of joy He had never felt before. God truly felt His responsibility, and this living being not only tugged at His heart but warmed and moved His heart with every little move he made. When this living being stood in front of God, it was the first time He had the thought to gain more of such people. This was the series of events that began with this first thought that God had. For God, all of these events were occurring for the first time, but in these first events, no matter what He felt at the time—joy, responsibility, concern—there was no one for Him to share it with. Starting from that moment, God truly felt a loneliness and a sadness that He had never experienced before. He felt that man could not accept or comprehend His love and concern, or His intentions for man, so He still felt sorrow and pain in His heart. Although He had done these things for man, man was not aware of it and did not understand. Aside from happiness, the joy and comfort man brought to Him quickly brought with it His first feelings of sorrow and loneliness. These were God's thoughts and feelings at that time. While God was doing all these things, in His heart He went from joy to sorrow and from sorrow to pain, and these feelings were mixed with anxiety. All He wanted to do was to make haste to let this person, this mankind know what was in His heart and understand His intentions sooner. Then, they could become His followers and share His thoughts and align with His will. They would no longer merely listen to God speak and remain speechless; they would no longer be unaware of how to join God in His work; above all, they would no longer be people indifferent to God's requirements. These first things that God did are very meaningful and hold great value for His management plan and for human beings today.

After creating all things and mankind, God did not rest. He was restless and eager to carry out His management, and to gain the people He so loved among mankind.

God Does a Series of Unprecedented Works Around the Time of the Age of Law

Next, not long after God created human beings, we see from the Bible that there was a great flood across the entire world. Noah is mentioned in the record of the flood, and it can be said that Noah was the first person to receive God's call to work with Him to complete a task of God. Of course, this was also the first time God had called upon a person on the earth to do something according to His command. Once Noah finished building the ark, God flooded the earth for the first time. When God destroyed the earth with the flood, it was the first time since creating human beings that He felt overcome with disgust toward them; this is what forced God to make the painful decision to destroy this human race through a flood. After the flood destroyed the earth, God made His first covenant with humans, a covenant to show that He would never again destroy the world with floods. The sign of this covenant was the rainbow. This was God's first covenant with mankind, so the rainbow was the first sign of a covenant given by God; the rainbow is a real, physical thing that exists. It is the very existence of the rainbow that makes God often feel sadness for the previous human race which He lost, and serves as a constant reminder for Him of what happened to them.... God would not slow His pace—He was restless and eager to take the next step in His management. Subsequently, God selected Abraham as His first choice for His work throughout Israel. This was also the first time God selected such a candidate. God resolved to begin carrying out His work of saving mankind through this person, and to continue His work among this person's descendants. We can see in the Bible that this is what God did with Abraham. God then made Israel the first chosen land, and began His work of the Age of Law through His chosen people, the Israelites. Once again for the first time, God provided to the Israelites the express rules and laws that mankind should follow, and He explained them in detail. This was the first time God had provided human beings with such specific, standardized rules for how they should give sacrifices, how they should live, what they should do and not do, which festivals and days they should observe, and principles to follow in everything they did. This was the first time God had given mankind such detailed, standardized regulations and principles about how to live their lives.

Each time that I say "the first time," it refers to a type of work that God had never before undertaken. It refers to work that did not exist before, and even though God had created mankind and all manner of creatures and living things, this is a type of work that He had never done before. All of this work involved God's management of mankind; it all had to do with people and His salvation and management of them. After Abraham, God once again made another first—He chose Job to be the one who lived under the law and who could withstand the temptations of Satan while continuing to fear God, shun evil, and stand witness for God. This was also the first time that God allowed Satan to tempt a person, and the first time He made a bet with Satan. In the end, for the first time

He gained someone who was capable of standing witness for and bearing witness to Him while facing Satan, and someone who could thoroughly shame Satan. Since God had created mankind, this was the first person He had gained who was able to bear witness for Him. Once He had gained this man, God was even more eager to continue His management and carry out the next stage in His work, preparing the location and the people He would choose for the next step of His work.

After fellowshiping about all of this, do you have a true understanding of God's will? God considers this instance of His management of mankind, of His salvation of mankind, as more important than anything else. He does these things not only with His mind, not only with His words, and certainly not with a casual attitude—He does all of these things with a plan, with a goal, with standards, and with His will. It is clear that this work to save mankind holds great significance for both God and man. No matter how difficult the work is, no matter how great the obstacles are, no matter how weak humans are, or how deep mankind's rebelliousness is, none of this is difficult for God. God keeps Himself busy, expending His painstaking effort and managing the work He Himself wants to carry out. He is also arranging everything and exercising His sovereignty over all those people on whom He will work and all the work He wants to complete—none of this has ever been done before. This is the first time God has used these methods and paid such a great price for this major project of managing and saving mankind. While God is carrying out this work, little by little He is expressing and releasing to mankind, without reservation, His painstaking effort, what He has and is, His wisdom and almightiness, and every aspect of His disposition. He releases and expresses these things as He has never done before. So, in the entire universe, aside from the people who God aims to manage and save, there have never been any creatures so close to God, that have had such an intimate relationship with Him. In His heart, mankind, which He wants to manage and save, is most important; He values this mankind above all else. Even though He has paid a great price for them, and even though He is continually hurt and disobeyed by them, He never gives up on them and continues tirelessly in His work, with no complaints or regrets. This is because He knows that sooner or later, people will awaken to His call and be moved by His words, recognize that He is the Lord of creation, and return to His side ...

After hearing all of this today, you may feel that everything that God does is very normal. It seems that humans have always felt some of God's intentions for them from His words and from His work, but there is always a certain distance between their feelings or their knowledge and what God is thinking. That is why I think it is necessary to communicate with all people about why God created humankind, and the background behind His wish to gain the mankind He hoped for. It is essential to share this with everyone, so that everyone is clear and understands it in their heart. Because God's every thought and idea, and every phase and every period of His work tie into, and are closely linked to, His entire management work, therefore when you understand God's

thoughts, ideas, and His will in every step of His work, it is the same as understanding how the work of His management plan came about. It is on this foundation that your understanding of God deepens. Although everything God did when He first created the world, which I mentioned previously, for now seems to be merely "information," irrelevant to the pursuit of truth, over the course of your experience there will however be a day when you do not think this is something so simple as a couple of pieces of information, nor that it is simply some kind of mystery. As your life progresses, once God has some place in your heart, or once you more thoroughly and deeply understand His will, then you will truly understand the importance and the necessity of what I am talking about today. No matter the extent to which you accept this now, it is still necessary for you to understand and know these things. When God does something, when He carries out His work, no matter if it is with His ideas or His own hands, no matter if it is the first time He has done it or the last, ultimately, God has a plan, and His purposes and His thoughts are in everything He does. These purposes and thoughts represent God's disposition, and they express what He has and is. These two things—God's disposition and what He has and is—must be understood by every single person. Once a person understands His disposition and what He has and is, they can gradually understand why God does what He does and why He says what He says. From that, they can then have more faith to follow God, to pursue truth and a change in their disposition. That is to say, man's understanding of God and his faith in God are inseparable.

If what people gain knowledge of and come to understand is God's disposition and what He has and is, then what they gain will be life that comes from God. Once this life has been wrought inside you, your fear of God will become greater and greater. This is a gain that comes very naturally. If you do not want to understand or know about God's disposition or His essence, if you do not even want to ponder over or focus on these things, I can tell you with certainty that the way you are currently pursuing your faith in God can never allow you to meet His will or gain His praise. More than that, you can never truly attain salvation—these are the final consequences. When people do not understand God and do not know His disposition, their hearts can never truly open up to Him. Once they have understood God, they will begin to appreciate and savor what is in His heart with interest and faith. When you appreciate and savor what is in God's heart, your heart will gradually, bit by bit, open up to Him. When your heart opens up to Him, you will feel how shameful and contemptible your exchanges with God, your demands of God, and your own extravagant desires were. When your heart truly opens up to God, you will see that His heart is such an infinite world, and you will enter into a realm you have never experienced before. In this realm there is no cheating, there is no deception, there is no darkness, and no evil. There is only sincerity and faithfulness; only light and rectitude; only righteousness and kindness. It is full of love and care, full of compassion and tolerance, and through it you feel the happiness and joy of being alive. These things are what God will reveal to you when you open up your heart to Him. This infinite world

is full of God's wisdom and omnipotence; it is also full of His love and His authority. Here you can see every aspect of what God has and is, what brings Him joy, why He worries and why He becomes sad, why He becomes angry.... This is what every single person can see who opens up their heart and allows God to come in. God can only come into your heart if you open it up to Him. You can only see what God has and is, and you can only see His intentions for you, if He has come into your heart. At that time, you will discover that everything about God is so precious, that what He has and is is so worthy of treasuring. Compared to that, the people who surround you, the objects and events in your life, and even your loved ones, your partner, and the things you love, are hardly worth mentioning. They are so small, and so lowly; you will feel that no material object will ever be able to draw you in again, or that any material object will ever again be able to entice you to pay any price for it. In God's humility you will see His greatness and His supremacy. Moreover, you will see in some deed of God that you previously believed to be guite small His infinite wisdom and His tolerance, and you will see His patience, His forbearance, and His understanding of you. This will engender in you an adoration for Him. On that day, you will feel that mankind is living in such a filthy world, that the people by your side and the things that happen in your life, and even those you love, their love for you, and their so-called protection or their concern for you are not even worth mentioning—only God is your beloved, and it is only God that you treasure the most. When that day comes, I believe that there will be some people who say: God's love is so great, and His essence is so holy—in God there is no deceit, no evil, no envy, and no strife, but only righteousness and authenticity, and everything that God has and is should be longed for by humans. Humans should strive for and aspire to it. On what basis is mankind's ability to achieve this built? It is built on the basis of their understanding of God's disposition, and their understanding of God's essence. So understanding God's disposition and what He has and is, is a lifelong lesson for every person; this is a lifelong goal pursued by every person who strives to change their disposition, and strives to know God.

God's First Time Becoming Flesh to Do Work

We just talked about all the work that God did, the series of unprecedented works that He carried out. Every one of these things is relevant to God's management plan, and to God's will. They are also relevant to the disposition of God Himself and His essence. If we want to understand more of what God has and is, we cannot stop at the Old Testament or at the Age of Law—we need to continue onward, following along with the steps God took in His work. So, as God ended the Age of Law and began the Age of Grace, let our own footsteps follow behind, into the Age of Grace—an age full of grace and redemption. In this age, God again did something very important that had never before been done. The work in this new age for both God and mankind was a new starting point—a starting point that consisted of yet another new work done by God that

had never been done before. This new work was unprecedented, something beyond the powers of imagination of humans and all creatures. It is something that is now well known to all people—for the first time, God became a human being, and for the first time He began new work in the form of a man, with the identity of a man. This new work signified that God had completed His work in the Age of Law, and that He would no longer do or say anything under the law. Neither would He say or do anything in the form of the law or according to the principles or rules of the law. That is, all His work based on the law was halted forever and would not be continued, because God wanted to begin new work and do new things. His plan once again had a new starting point, and so God had to lead mankind into the next age.

Whether this was joyful or ominous news to humans depended on the essence of each individual person. It could be said that to some people this was not joyful news, but ominous, because when God began His new work, those people who just followed the laws and rules, who just followed the doctrines but did not fear God, tended to use God's old work to condemn His new work. For these people, this was ominous news. But for every person who was innocent and open, who was sincere to God and willing to receive His redemption, God's first incarnation was very joyful news. For, ever since humans first were brought into existence, this was the first time God had appeared and lived among mankind in a form that was not the Spirit; this time, He was born of a human and lived among people as the Son of man, and worked in their midst. This "first" broke down people's notions; it was beyond all imagination. Moreover, all of God's followers gained a tangible benefit. God not only ended the old age, but He also ended His old working methods and working style. He no longer asked His messengers to convey His will, He was no longer hidden in the clouds, and no longer appeared or spoke to humans commandingly through thunder. Unlike anything before, through a method unimaginable to humans that was difficult for them to understand or accept—becoming flesh—He became the Son of man in order to begin the work of that age. This act of God caught mankind totally unprepared; it made them embarrassed, because God had once again started new work that He had never done before. Today, we will take a look at what new work God accomplished in the new age, and we will consider what there is for us to learn about from this new work in terms of God's disposition and what He has and is.

The following are words recorded in the New Testament of the Bible:

1. Jesus Plucks the Ears of Corn to Eat on the Sabbath

Mat 12:1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.

2. The Son of Man Is Lord of the Sabbath

Mat 12:6-8 But I say to you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have

condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

Let us first take a look at this passage: "At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat."

Why have I selected this passage? What connection does it have to God's disposition? In this text, the first thing we know is that it was the Sabbath day, but the Lord Jesus went out and led His disciples through the corn fields. What is even more "treacherous" is that they even "began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat." In the Age of Law, Jehovah God's law stipulated that people could not casually go out or take part in activities on the Sabbath—there were many things that could not be done on the Sabbath. This action on the part of the Lord Jesus was puzzling for those who had lived under the law for a long time, and it even provoked criticism. As for their confusion and how they talked about what Jesus did, we will put that aside for now and first discuss why the Lord Jesus chose to do this on the Sabbath, of all days, and what He wanted to communicate to people who were living under the law through this action. This is the connection between this passage and God's disposition that I want to talk about.

When the Lord Jesus came, He used His practical actions to tell the people that God had departed the Age of Law and had begun new work, and that this new work did not require the observation of the Sabbath. God's coming out from the confines of the Sabbath day was just a foretaste of His new work; the real and great work was still to come. When the Lord Jesus began His work, He had already left behind the "shackles" of the Age of Law, and had broken through the regulations and principles of that age. In Him, there was no trace of anything related to the law; He had cast it off entirely and no longer observed it, and He no longer required mankind to observe it. So here you see the Lord Jesus went through the corn fields on the Sabbath, and that the Lord did not rest; He was outside working, and not resting. This action of His was a shock to people's notions and it communicated to them that He no longer lived under the law, and that He had left the confines of the Sabbath and appeared before mankind and in their midst in a new image, with a new way of working. This action of His told people that He had brought with Him new work, work that began with emerging from being under the law, and departing from the Sabbath. When God carried out His new work, He no longer clung to the past, and He was no longer concerned about the regulations of the Age of Law. Neither was He affected by His work in the previous age, but instead worked on the Sabbath just as He did on every other day, and when His disciples were hungry on the Sabbath, they could pick ears of corn to eat. This was all very normal in God's eyes. For God, it is permissible to have a new beginning for much of the new work He wants to do and the new words He wants to say. When He begins something new, He neither mentions His previous work nor continues to carry it out. Because God has His principles in His work, when He wants to begin new work, it is when He wants to bring mankind

into a new stage of His work, and when His work will enter a higher phase. If people continue to act according to the old sayings or regulations or continue to hold fast to them, He will not remember or approve that. This is because He has already brought new work, and has entered a new phase of His work. When He initiates new work, He appears to mankind with a completely new image, from a completely new angle, and in a completely new way so that people can see different aspects of His disposition and what He has and is. This is one of His goals in His new work. God does not cling to old things or walk the well-trodden path; when He works and speaks, He is not as prohibitive as people imagine. In God, all is free and liberated, and there is no prohibition, no constraints—what He brings to mankind is freedom and liberation. He is a living God, a God who genuinely, truly exists. He is not a puppet or a clay figure, and He is totally different from the idols that people enshrine and worship. He is living and vibrant, and what His words and work bring to mankind is all life and light, all freedom and liberation, because He holds the truth, the life, and the way—He is not constrained by anything in any of His work. No matter what people say and no matter how they see or assess His new work, He will carry out His work without a qualm. He will not worry about anyone's notions or finger-pointing as concerns His work and words, or even their strong opposition and resistance to His new work. No one among all of creation can use human reason, or human imagination, knowledge, or morality to measure or define what God does, to discredit, disrupt or sabotage His work. There is no prohibition in His work and what He does; it will not be constrained by any man, event, or thing, nor will it be disrupted by any hostile forces. As far as His new work is concerned, He is an evervictorious King, and any hostile forces and all the heresies and fallacies of mankind are trampled under His footstool. No matter which new stage of His work He is carrying out, it will surely be developed and expanded in mankind's midst, and it will surely be carried out unhindered throughout the entire universe until His great work has been completed. This is God's almightiness and wisdom, His authority and power. Thus, the Lord Jesus could openly go out and work on the Sabbath because in His heart there were no rules, no knowledge or doctrine that originated from mankind. What He had was God's new work and God's way. His work was the way to free mankind, to release people, to allow them to exist in the light and to live. Meanwhile, those who worship idols or false gods live every day bound by Satan, restrained by all kinds of rules and taboos—today one thing is prohibited, tomorrow another—there is no freedom in their lives. They are like prisoners in shackles, living life with no joy to speak of. What does "prohibition" represent? It represents constraints, bonds, and evil. As soon as a person worships an idol, they are worshiping a false god, an evil spirit. Prohibition comes along when such activities are engaged in. You cannot eat this or that, today you cannot go out, tomorrow you cannot cook, the next day you cannot move to a new house, certain days must be selected for weddings and funerals and even for giving birth to a child. What is this called? This is called prohibition; it is the bondage of mankind, and it is the shackles of

Satan and evil spirits controlling people and restraining their hearts and bodies. Do these prohibitions exist with God? When speaking of the holiness of God, you should first think of this: With God there are no prohibitions. God has principles in His words and work, but there are no prohibitions, because God Himself is the truth, the way, and the life.

Now let us look at the following passage from the scriptures: "But I say to you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Mat 12:6–8). What does the word "temple" refer to here? To put it simply, it refers to a magnificent, tall building, and in the Age of Law, the temple was a place for priests to worship God. When the Lord Jesus said "in this place is one greater than the temple," who did "one" refer to? Clearly, the "one" is the Lord Jesus in the flesh, because only He was greater than the temple. What did those words tell people? They told people to come out of the temple—God had already left the temple and was no longer working in it, so people should seek God's footsteps outside of the temple and follow His steps in His new work. When the Lord Jesus said this, there was a premise behind His words, which was that under the law, people had come to see the temple as something greater than God Himself. That is, people worshiped the temple rather than worshiping God, so the Lord Jesus warned them not to worship idols, but to instead worship God, for He is supreme. Thus, He said: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It is evident that in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, most people living under the law no longer worshiped Jehovah, but were merely going through the motions of sacrificing, and the Lord Jesus determined that this constituted idol worship. These idolworshipers saw the temple as something greater and higher than God. In their hearts there was only the temple, not God, and if they were to lose the temple, then they would lose their dwelling place. Without the temple they had nowhere to worship and could not carry out their sacrifices. Their so-called "dwelling place" is where they used the false pretense of worshiping Jehovah God in order to stay in the temple and carry out their own affairs. Their so-called "sacrificing" was just them carrying out their own personal shameful dealings under the guise of conducting their service in the temple. This was the reason people at that time saw the temple as greater than God. The Lord Jesus spoke these words as a warning to people, because they were using the temple as a front, and sacrifices as a cover for cheating people and cheating God. If you apply these words to the present, they are still equally valid and equally pertinent. Although people today have experienced different work of God than the people in the Age of Law experienced, their nature and essence are the same. In the context of the work today, people will still do the same type of things as are represented by the words, "the temple is greater than God." For example, people see fulfilling their duty as their job; they see bearing witness to God and battling the great red dragon as political movements in defense of human rights, for democracy and freedom; they turn their duty to utilize their skills into careers, but they treat fearing God and shunning evil as nothing but a piece of

religious doctrine to observe; and so on. Are not these behaviors essentially the same as "the temple is greater than God"? The difference is that, two thousand years ago, people were carrying out their personal business in the physical temple, but today, people carry out their personal business in intangible temples. Those people that value rules see rules as greater than God, those people that love status see status as greater than God, those that love their career see careers as greater than God, and so on—all their expressions lead Me to say: "People praise God as the greatest through their words, but in their eyes everything is greater than God." This is because as soon as people find an opportunity along their path of following God to display their own talents, or to carry out their own business or their own career, they distance themselves from God and throw themselves into their beloved career. As for what God has entrusted to them, and His will, those things have long since been discarded. What is the difference between the state of these people and those who conducted their own business in the temple two thousand years ago?

Next, let us take a look at the last sentence in this passage: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day." Is there a practical side to this sentence? Can you see the practical side? Every single thing that God says comes from His heart, so why did He say this? How do you understand it? You may understand the meaning of this sentence now, but at the time when it was spoken not many people did because mankind had just come out of the Age of Law. For them, departing from the Sabbath was a very difficult thing to do, not to mention understanding what a true Sabbath is.

The sentence "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" tells people that everything about God is not of a material nature, and although God can provide for all of your material needs, once all of your material needs have been met, can the satisfaction from these things replace your pursuit of truth? That is clearly not possible! God's disposition and what He has and is, which we have fellowshiped about, are both the truth. Its value cannot be measured against any material objects, no matter how valuable, nor can its value be quantified in terms of money, because it is not a material object, and it supplies the needs of each and every person's heart. For every person, the value of these intangible truths should be greater than the value of any material things that you might value, should they not? This statement is something you need to linger over. The key point of what I have said is that what God has and is and everything about God are the most important things for every single person and cannot be replaced by any material object. I will give you an example: When you are hungry, you need food. This food can be more or less good or more or less unsatisfactory, but as long as you have your fill, that unpleasant feeling of being hungry will no longer be there—it will be gone. You can sit in peace, and your body will be at rest. People's hunger can be resolved with food, but when you are following God and feel that you have no understanding of Him, how can you resolve the emptiness in your heart? Can it be resolved with food? Or when you are following God and do not understand His will, what

can you use to make up for that hunger in your heart? In the process of your experience of salvation through God, while pursuing a change in your disposition, if you do not understand His will or do not know what the truth is, if you do not understand God's disposition, then will you not feel very uneasy? Will you not feel a strong hunger and thirst in your heart? Will these feelings not prevent you from feeling at rest in your heart? So how can you make up for that hunger in your heart—is there a way to resolve it? Some people go shopping, some seek out their friends to confide in, some people indulge in a long sleep, others read more of God's words, or they work harder and expend more effort to fulfill their duties. Can these things resolve your actual difficulties? All of you fully understand these kinds of practices. When you feel powerless, when you feel a strong desire to gain enlightenment from God to allow you to know the reality of the truth and His will, what do you need most? What you need is not a full meal, and it is not a few kind words, let alone the transient comfort and satisfaction of the fleshwhat you need is for God to directly and clearly tell you what you should do and how you should do it, to clearly tell you what the truth is. After you have understood this, even if you gain only a tiny bit of understanding, will you not feel more satisfied in your heart than if you had eaten a good meal? When your heart is satisfied, does not your heart and your entire being gain true rest? Through this analogy and analysis, do you understand now why I wanted to share with you this sentence, "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day"? Its meaning is that what comes from God, what He has and is, and everything about Him, are greater than any other thing, including the thing or the person you once believed you treasured most. That is to say, if a person cannot gain words from the mouth of God or they do not understand His will, they cannot gain rest. In your future experiences, you will understand why I wanted you to see this passage today—this is very important. Everything that God does is truth and life. The truth is something that people cannot lack in their lives, and it is something they can never do without; you could also say that it is the greatest thing. Although you cannot look at it or touch it, its importance to you cannot be ignored; it is the only thing that can bring rest to your heart.

Is your understanding of truth integrated with your own states? In real life, you first have to think of which truths relate to the people, events, and things you have encountered; it is among these truths that you can find God's will and connect what you have encountered with His will. If you do not know which aspects of the truth relate to the things you have encountered but instead go directly to seek God's will, this is a blind approach which cannot achieve results. If you want to seek the truth and understand God's will, first you need to look at what kind of things have happened to you, which aspects of the truth they are related to, and look for the specific truth in the word of God that relates to what you have experienced. Then you look for the path of practice that is right for you in that truth; in this way you can gain an indirect understanding of God's will. Searching for and practicing the truth is not mechanically applying a doctrine or following

a formula. The truth is not formulaic, neither is it a law. It is not dead—it is life itself, it is a living thing, and it is the rule that a created being must follow in life and the rule a human must have in life. This is something that you must, as much as possible, understand through experience. No matter what stage you have arrived at in your experience, you are inseparable from God's word or the truth, and what you understand of God's disposition and what you know of what God has and is are all expressed in God's words; they are inextricably linked with the truth. God's disposition and what He has and is are, in themselves, the truth; the truth is an authentic manifestation of God's disposition and what He has and is. It makes what He has and is concrete, and it makes a clear statement of what He has and is; it tells you more straightforwardly what God likes, what He does not like, what He wants you to do and what He does not permit you to do, which people He despises and which people He delights in. Behind the truths that God expresses, people can see His pleasure, anger, sorrow, and happiness, as well as His essence—this is the revealing of His disposition. Aside from knowing what God has and is, and understanding His disposition from His word, what is most important is the need to reach this understanding through practical experience. If a person removes themselves from real life in order to know God, they will not be able to achieve that. Even if there are people who can gain some understanding from the word of God, their understanding is limited to theories and words, and there arises a disparity with what God Himself is really like.

What we are communicating about now is all within the scope of the stories recorded in the Bible. Through these stories, and through analyzing these things that happened, people can understand His disposition and what He has and is that He has expressed, allowing them to know every aspect of God more broadly, more deeply, more comprehensively, and more thoroughly. So, is the only way to know every aspect of God through these stories? No, it is not the only way! For what God says and the work He does in the Age of Kingdom can better help people know His disposition, and know it more fully. However, I think it is a bit easier to know God's disposition and to understand what He has and is through some examples or stories recorded in the Bible that people are familiar with. If I take the words of judgment and chastisement and the truths that God expresses today, word for word, to enable you to know Him in this way, you will feel it is too dull and too tedious, and some people will even feel that God's words seem to be formulaic. But if I take these Bible stories as examples to help people know God's disposition, they will not find it boring. You could say that in the course of explaining these examples, the details of what was in God's heart at the time-His mood or sentiment, or His thoughts and ideas—have been told to people in human language, and the goal of all this is to allow them to appreciate, to feel that what God has and is is not formulaic. It is not a legend, or something that people cannot see or touch. It is something that truly exists, that people can feel and appreciate. This is the ultimate goal. You could say that people living in this age are blessed. They can draw on Bible stories to gain a broader understanding of God's previous work; they can see His disposition through the work that He has done; they can understand God's will for mankind through these dispositions that He has expressed, and understand the concrete manifestations of His holiness and His care for humans, and in this way they can reach a more detailed and deeper knowledge of God's disposition. I believe that all of you can now feel this!

Within the scope of the work that the Lord Jesus completed in the Age of Grace, you can see another aspect of what God has and is. This aspect was expressed through His flesh, and people were able to see and appreciate it because of His humanity. In the Son of man, people saw how God in the flesh lived out His humanity, and they saw God's divinity expressed through the flesh. These two types of expression allowed people to see a very real God, and they allowed people to form a different concept of God. However, during the period of time between the creation of the world and the end of the Age of Law, that is, before the Age of Grace, the only aspects of God that were seen, heard, and experienced by the people were God's divinity, the things that God did and said in a non-material realm, and the things that He expressed from His real person that could not be seen or touched. Often, these things made people feel that God was so towering in His greatness that they could not get close to Him. The impression God usually gave people was that He flickered in and out of their ability to perceive Him, and people even felt that every single one of His thoughts and ideas was so mysterious and so elusive that there was no way to reach them, much less even attempt to understand and appreciate them. For people, everything about God was very distant, so distant that people could not see it, could not touch it. He seemed to be high up in the sky, and seemed not to exist at all. So for people, understanding God's heart and mind or any of His thinking was unachievable, and even beyond their reach. Even though God performed some concrete work in the Age of Law, and He also issued some specific words and expressed some specific dispositions to allow people to appreciate and to perceive some real knowledge about Him, yet in the end, these expressions of what God has and is came from a non-material realm, and what people understood, what they knew was still about the divine aspect of what He has and is. Mankind could not gain a concrete concept from this expression of what He has and is, and their impression of God was still stuck within the scope of "a spiritual body that is hard to get close to, that flickers in and out of perception." Because God did not use a specific object or an image belonging to the material realm to appear before people, they remained unable to define Him using human language. In people's hearts and minds, they always wanted to use their own language to establish a standard for God, to make Him tangible and to humanize Him, such as how tall He is, how big He is, what He looks like, what exactly He likes and what His personality is. Actually, in His heart God knew that people were thinking this way. He was very clear on people's needs, and of course He also knew what He should do, so He carried out His work in a different way in the Age of Grace. This new way was both divine and humanized. In the period of time that the Lord Jesus

was working, people could see that God had many human expressions. For example, He could dance, He could attend weddings, He could commune with people, speak with them, and discuss things with them. In addition to that, the Lord Jesus also completed a lot of work that represented His divinity, and of course all of this work was an expression and a revelation of God's disposition. During this time, when God's divinity was realized in ordinary flesh in a way that people could see and touch, they no longer felt that He was flickering in and out of perception or that they could not get close to Him. On the contrary, they could try to grasp the will of God or understand His divinity through every movement, through the words, and through the work of the Son of man. The incarnate Son of man expressed God's divinity through His humanity and conveyed the will of God to mankind. And through His expression of God's will and disposition, He also revealed to people the God that cannot be seen or touched who dwells in the spiritual realm. What people saw was God Himself in tangible form, made of flesh and blood. So the incarnate Son of man made things such as the identity of God Himself, God's status, image, disposition, and what He has and is, concrete and humanized. Even though the external appearance of the Son of man had some limitations regarding the image of God, His essence and what He has and is were entirely able to represent the identity and status of God Himself-there were merely some differences in the form of expression. We cannot deny that the Son of man represented the identity and status of God Himself, both in the form of His humanity and in His divinity. During this time, however, God worked through the flesh, spoke from the perspective of the flesh, and stood before mankind with the identity and status of the Son of man, and this gave people the opportunity to encounter and experience the true words and work of God among mankind. It also allowed people insight into His divinity and His greatness in the midst of humility, as well as to gain a preliminary understanding and definition of the authenticity and reality of God. Even though the work completed by the Lord Jesus, His ways of working, and the perspective from which He spoke differed from God's real person in the spiritual realm, everything about Him truly represented God Himself, whom mankind had never seen before—this cannot be denied! That is to say, no matter in what form God appears, no matter from which perspective He speaks, or in what image He faces mankind, God represents nothing but Himself. He can represent neither any one human, nor any of corrupted mankind. God is God Himself, and this cannot be denied.

Next, we will take a look at a parable told by the Lord Jesus in the Age of Grace.

3. The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Mat 18:12–14 How think you? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, truly I say to you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

This passage is a parable—what kind of feeling does it give to people? The way of expression—the parable—used here is a figure of speech in human language, and as such it belongs within the scope of human knowledge. If God had said something similar in the Age of Law, people would have felt that such words were not truly consistent with who God was, but when the Son of man delivered these words in the Age of Grace, it felt comforting, warm, and intimate to people. When God became flesh. when He appeared in the form of a man, He used a very appropriate parable that came from His own humanity, in order to express the voice of His heart. This voice represented God's own voice and the work He wanted to do in that age. It also represented an attitude that God had toward people in the Age of Grace. Looking from the perspective of God's attitude toward people. He compared each person to a sheep. If a sheep was lost, He would do whatever it took to find it. This represented a principle of God's work at that time among mankind, when He was in the flesh. God used this parable to describe His resolve and attitude in that work. This was the advantage of God becoming flesh: He could take advantage of mankind's knowledge and use human language to speak to people, and to express His will. He explained or "translated" to man His profound, divine language that people struggled to understand in human language, in a human way. This helped people understand His will and know what He wanted to do. He could also have conversations with people from the human perspective, using human language, and communicate with people in a way they understood. He could even speak and work using human language and knowledge so that people could feel God's kindness and closeness, so that they could see His heart. What do you see in this? Is there any prohibition in God's words and actions? The way people see it, there is no way that God could use human knowledge, language, or ways of speaking to talk about what God Himself wanted to say, the work He wanted to do, or to express His own will. But this is erroneous thinking. God used this type of parable so that people could feel the realness and the sincerity of God, and see His attitude toward people during that time period. This parable awakened people who had been living under the law for a long time from a dream, and it also inspired generation after generation of people who lived in the Age of Grace. By reading the passage of this parable, people know God's sincerity in saving mankind and understand the weight and importance accorded to mankind in God's heart.

Let us take a look at the last sentence in this passage: "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Was this the Lord Jesus' own words, or the words of the Father in heaven? On the surface, it looks like it is the Lord Jesus who is speaking, but His will represents the will of God Himself, which is why He said: "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." People at that time only acknowledged the Father in heaven as God, and believed that this person whom they saw in front of their eyes was merely sent by Him, and could not represent the Father in heaven. That is why the

Lord Jesus had to add this sentence to the end of this parable, so that people could really feel God's will for mankind and feel the authenticity and the accuracy of what He said. Even though this sentence was a simple thing to say, it was spoken with care and love and revealed the Lord Jesus' humility and hiddenness. No matter whether God became flesh or whether He worked in the spiritual realm, He knew the human heart best, and best understood what people needed, knew what people worried about, and what confused them, and that is why He added this sentence. This sentence highlighted a problem hidden in mankind: People were skeptical of what the Son of man said, which is to say, when the Lord Jesus was speaking He had to add: "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish," and only on this premise could His words bear fruit, to make people believe their accuracy and improve their credibility. This shows that when God became a regular Son of man, God and mankind had a very uneasy relationship, and that the Son of man's situation was very embarrassing. It also shows how insignificant the Lord Jesus' status among humans was at that time. When He said this, it was actually to tell people: You can rest assured these words do not represent what is in My own heart, but they are the will of the God who is in your hearts. For mankind, was this not an ironic thing? Even though God working in the flesh had many advantages that He did not have in His person, He had to withstand their doubts and rejection as well as their numbness and dullness. It could be said that the process of the work of the Son of man was the process of experiencing mankind's rejection and experiencing their competing against Him. More than that, it was the process of working to continuously win mankind's trust and to conquer mankind through what He has and is, through His own essence. It was not so much that God incarnate was waging an on-the-ground war against Satan; it was more that God became an ordinary man and began a struggle with those who follow Him, and in this struggle the Son of man completed His work with His humility, with what He has and is, and with His love and wisdom. He obtained the people He wanted, won the identity and status He deserved, and "returned" to His throne.

Next, let us look at the following two passages of scripture.

4. Forgive Seventy Times Seven

Mat 18:21–22 Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said to him, I say not to you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

5. The Lord's Love

Mat 22:37–39 Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like to it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Of these two passages, one speaks of forgiveness and the other speaks of love.

These two topics really highlight the work the Lord Jesus wanted to carry out in the Age of Grace.

When God became flesh, He brought along with Him a stage of His work, which was the specific work tasks and the disposition He wanted to express in this age. In that period, everything that the Son of man did revolved around the work that God wanted to carry out in this age. He would do no more and no less. Every single thing He said and every type of work that He carried out was all related to this age. Regardless of whether He expressed it in a human way with human language or through divine language, and no matter in which way or from which perspective He did so, His goal was to help people understand what He wanted to do, what His will was, and what His requirements of people were. He might use various means and different perspectives to help people understand and know His will, and to understand His work of saving mankind. So in the Age of Grace we see the Lord Jesus using human language most of the time to express what He wanted to communicate with mankind. Even more, we see Him from the perspective of an ordinary guide speaking with people, providing for their needs, and helping them with what they had requested. This way of working was not seen in the Age of Law that came before the Age of Grace. He became more intimate and more compassionate with mankind, as well as more able to achieve practical results in both form and manner. The metaphor about forgiving people seventy times seven really clarifies this point. The purpose achieved by the number in this metaphor is to allow people to understand the Lord Jesus' intention at the time that He said this. His intention was that people should forgive others—not once or twice, and not even seven times, but seventy times seven. What kind of idea is contained within the idea of "seventy times seven"? It is to cause people to make forgiveness their own responsibility, something they must learn, and a "way" by which they must abide. Even though this was just a metaphor, it served to highlight the crucial point. It helped people to deeply appreciate what He meant and to find the proper ways of practice and the principles and standards of practice. This metaphor helped people to understand clearly and gave them a correct concept—that they should learn forgiveness and forgive any number of times without conditions, but with an attitude of tolerance and understanding for others. When the Lord Jesus said this, what was in His heart? Was He really thinking of the number "seventy times seven?" No, He was not. Is there a number of times God will forgive man? There are many people who are very interested in the "number of times" mentioned here, who really want to understand the origin and the meaning of this number. They want to understand why this number came out of the Lord Jesus' mouth; they believe that there is a deeper implication to this number. But actually, this was just a figure of human speech which God used. Any implication or meaning must be taken along with the Lord Jesus' requirements for mankind. When God had not yet become flesh, people did not understand much of what He said, because His words came out of complete divinity. The perspective and context of what He said was invisible and unreachable to mankind;

it was expressed from a spiritual realm that people could not see. For people who lived in the flesh, they could not pass through the spiritual realm. But after God became flesh, He spoke to mankind from the perspective of humanity, and He came out of and surpassed the scope of the spiritual realm. He could express His divine disposition, will, and attitude through things humans could imagine, things they saw and encountered in their lives, and using methods that humans could accept, in a language they could understand, and with knowledge they could grasp, to allow mankind to understand and to know God, to comprehend His intention and His required standards within the scope of their capacity and to the degree that they were able. This was the method and principle of God's work in humanity. Even though God's ways and His principles of working in the flesh were mostly achieved by means of or through humanity, it truly did achieve results that could not be achieved by working directly in divinity. God's work in humanity was more concrete, authentic, and targeted, the methods were much more flexible, and in form it surpassed the work carried out during the Age of Law.

Next, let us talk about loving the Lord and loving your neighbor as yourself. Is this something that is directly expressed in divinity? No, clearly not! These were all things that the Son of man spoke about in humanity; only human beings would say something like "Love your neighbor as yourself," and "Love others as you cherish your own life." This manner of speaking is exclusively human. God has never spoken in this way. At the very least, God does not have this type of language in His divinity because He has no need of this kind of tenet, "Love your neighbor as yourself," in order to regulate His love for mankind, because God's love for mankind is a natural revelation of what He has and is. When have you ever heard God say anything like: "I love mankind as I love Myself"? You have not, because love is in God's essence and in what He has and is. God's love for mankind, and His attitude, and the way He treats people are a natural expression and revelation of His disposition. He does not need to deliberately do this in a certain way, or to deliberately follow a certain method or a moral code to achieve loving His neighbor as Himself—He already possesses this type of essence. What do you see in this? When God worked in humanity, many of His methods, words, and truths were expressed in a human way. But at the same time, God's disposition, what He has and is, and His will were expressed for people to know and understand. What they came to know and understand was exactly His essence and what He has and is, which represent the inherent identity and status of God Himself. That is to say, the Son of man in the flesh expressed the inherent disposition and essence of God Himself to the greatest extent possible and as accurately as possible. Not only was the Son of man's humanity not a hindrance or a barrier to man's communication and interaction with God in heaven, but it was actually the only channel and the only bridge for mankind to connect to the Lord of creation. Now, at this point, do you not feel that there are many similarities between the nature and methods of the work done by the Lord Jesus in the Age of Grace and the current stage of work? This current stage of work also uses a lot of human language to express God's disposition, and a lot of language and methods from mankind's daily life and human knowledge to express the will of God Himself. Once God becomes flesh, no matter if He is speaking from a human perspective or a divine perspective, lots of His language and methods of expression come through the medium of human language and methods. That is, when God becomes flesh, this is the best opportunity for you to see God's omnipotence and His wisdom, and to know every real aspect of God. When God became flesh, while He was growing up, He came to understand, learn, and grasp some of mankind's knowledge, common sense, language, and methods of expression in humanity. God incarnate possessed these things that came from the humans which He had created. They became tools of God in the flesh for expressing His disposition and His divinity, and allowed Him to make His work more pertinent, more authentic, and more accurate when He was working amidst mankind, from a human perspective and using human language. This made His work more accessible and more easily understood for people, thus achieving the results that God wanted. Is it not more practical for God to work in the flesh in this way? Is this not God's wisdom? When God became flesh, when God's flesh was able to take on the work that He wanted to carry out, that is when He would practically express His disposition and His work, and that was also the time when He could officially begin His ministry as the Son of man. This meant that there was no longer a "generation gap" between God and man, that God would soon cease His work of communicating through messengers, and that God Himself could personally express all the words and work in the flesh that He wanted to. It also meant that the people God saves were closer to Him, that His management work had entered new territory, and that all of mankind was about to be faced with a new era.

Everyone who has read the Bible knows that many events happened when the Lord Jesus was born. The greatest among those events was Him being hunted by the king of devils, which was an event so extreme that all of the city's children who were aged two years old and under were slaughtered. It is evident that God assumed great risk by becoming flesh among humans; the great price that He paid for completing His management of saving mankind is also evident. The great hopes that God held for His work among mankind in the flesh are also evident. When God's flesh was able to take on work among mankind, how did He feel? People should be able to understand that to some degree, should they not? At the very least, God was happy because He could start carrying out His new work among mankind. When the Lord Jesus was baptized and officially began His work to fulfill His ministry, God's heart was overwhelmed with joy because after so many years of waiting and preparation. He could finally wear the flesh of a normal man and begin His new work in the form of a man of flesh and blood, whom people could see and touch. He could finally speak face-to-face and heart-toheart with people through the identity of a man. God could finally come face to face with mankind through the medium of human ways and human language; He could provide

for mankind, enlighten them, and help them using human language; He could eat at the same table and live in the same space with them. He could also see human beings, see things, and see everything the way humans saw them and even through their own eyes. For God, this was already His first victory of His work in the flesh. It could also be said that it was an accomplishment of a great work—this of course was what God was happiest about. Starting from then, God felt, for the first time, a sort of comfort in His work among mankind. All of the events that came to pass were so practical and so natural, and the comfort that God felt was so true. For mankind, each time a new stage of God's work is accomplished, and each time God feels gratified, that is when mankind can come closer to God and to salvation. To God, this is also the launch of His new work, forging onward in His management plan, and, moreover, these are the times when His intentions approach complete fulfillment. For mankind, the arrival of such an opportunity is fortunate, and very good; for all those who await God's salvation, it is momentous and joyous news. When God carries out a new stage of work, then He has a new beginning, and when this new work and new beginning are launched and introduced among mankind, it is when the outcome of this stage of work has already been determined and accomplished and the final effect and fruit already seen by God. This is also when these effects make God feel satisfied, and, of course, it is when His heart is happy. God feels reassured because, in His eyes, He has already seen and determined the people He is looking for, and has already gained this group of people, a group that is able to make His work successful and bring Him satisfaction. Thus, He puts aside His worries, and He feels happy. In other words, when the flesh of God is able to embark upon new work among man, and He begins to, without obstruction, do the work that He must do, and when He feels that all has been accomplished, then for Him, the end is already in sight. Because of this He is satisfied, and His heart is happy. How is God's happiness expressed? Can you imagine what the answer might be? May God cry? Can God cry? Can God clap His hands? Can God dance? Can God sing? If so, what would He sing? Of course, God could sing a beautiful, moving song, a song that could express the joy and happiness in His heart. He could sing it for mankind, for Himself, and for all things. God's happiness can be expressed in any way—all of this is normal because God has joys and sorrows, and His various feelings can be expressed in various ways. This is His right, and nothing could be more normal and proper. People should not think anything else of it. You should not try to use the "band-tightening spell" a on God, telling Him He should not do this or that, He should not act this way or that, and in this way limit His happiness or any feeling He might have. In people's hearts God

a. The "band-tightening spell" is a spell used by the monk Tang Sanzang in the Chinese novel Journey to the West. He uses this spell to control Sun Wukong by tightening a metal band around the latter's head, giving him acute headaches, and thus bringing him under control. It has become a metaphor to describe something that binds a person.

cannot be happy, cannot shed tears, cannot weep—He cannot express any emotion. Through what we have communicated during these two fellowships, I believe you will no longer see God in this way, but will allow God to have some freedom and release. This is a very good thing. In the future if you are able to truly feel God's sadness when you hear about Him being sad, and you are able to truly feel His happiness when you hear about Him being happy, then at least you will be able to clearly know and understand what makes God happy and what makes Him sad. When you are able to feel sad because God is sad, and feel happy because God is happy, He will have fully gained your heart and there will no longer be any barrier between yourself and Him. You will no longer try to constrain God with human imaginings, notions, and knowledge. At that time, God will be alive and vivid in your heart. He will be the God of your life and the Master of everything about you. Do you have this kind of aspiration? Are you confident that you can achieve this?

Next, let us read the following passages from the scriptures:

6. The Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes (Mat 5:3-12)

Salt and Light (Mat 5:13–16)

Law (Mat 5:17-20)

Anger (Mat 5:21–26)

Adultery (Mat 5:27–30)

Divorce (Mat 5:31–32)

Vows (Mat 5:33–37)

Eye for Eye (Mat 5:38–42)

Love Your Enemies (Mat 5:43–48)

Instruction About Giving (Mat 6:1–4)

Prayer (Mat 6:5-8)

7. The Parables of the Lord Jesus

The Parable of the Sower (Mat 13:1–9)

The Parable of the Tares (Mat 13:24–30)

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mat 13:31–32)

The Parable of the Leaven (Mat 13:33)

The Parable of the Tares Explained (Mat 13:36–43)

The Parable of the Treasure (Mat 13:44)

The Parable of the Pearl (Mat 13:45–46)

The Parable of the Net (Mat 13:47–50)

8. The Commandments

Mat 22:37-39 Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and

with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like to it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Let us first look at each of the various parts of "The Sermon on the Mount." What do all of these different parts touch upon? It can be said, with certainty, that the contents of these various parts are all more elevated, more concrete, and closer to people's lives than the regulations of the Age of Law. To speak in modern terms, these things are more relevant to people's actual practice.

Let us read about the following specific content: How should you understand the beatitudes? What should you know about the law? How should anger be defined? How should adulterers be dealt with? How is divorce to be spoken about, and what kind of rules are there about it? Who can get divorced and who cannot get divorced? How about vows, an eye for an eye, loving your enemies, and being charitable? And so on. All of these things relate to every aspect of the practice of mankind's belief in God, and of their following God. Some of these practices are still applicable today, though they are shallower than what is currently required of people—they are fairly elementary truths which people encounter in their belief in God. From the time when the Lord Jesus began working, He was already beginning to carry out work on the life disposition of humans, but these aspects of His work were based on the foundation of the law. Did the rules and the ways of speaking about these topics have anything to do with the truth? Of course they did! All of the previous regulations and principles, as well as these sermons in the Age of Grace, were related to God's disposition and what He has and is, and of course, to the truth. No matter what God expresses, and no matter what mode of expression or language He uses, the things that He expresses all have their foundation, origin, and starting point in the principles of His disposition and what He has and is. This is absolutely true. So even though these things He said seem a little shallow now, you still cannot say that they are not the truth, because they were things that were indispensable for people in the Age of Grace in order to satisfy God's will and to achieve a change in their life disposition. Can you say that any one of these sermons is not in line with the truth? No, you cannot! Every one of them is the truth because they were all God's requirements for mankind; they were all principles and a scope given by God, showing how one should conduct oneself, and they represent God's disposition. However, based on the level of their growth in life at that time, these were the only things that they were able to accept and comprehend. Because mankind's sin had not yet been resolved, these were the only words that the Lord Jesus could issue, and He could only utilize the simple teachings contained within this kind of scope to tell the people of that time how they should act, what they should do, within what principles and scope they should do things, and how they should believe in God and meet His requirements. All of this was determined based on the stature of mankind at that time. It was not easy for people living under the law to accept these teachings, so what the Lord Jesus taught had to stay within this scope.

Next, let us take a look at the various contents of "The Parables of the Lord Jesus." The first is the parable of the sower. This is a very interesting parable; sowing seeds is a common event in people's lives. The second is the parable of the tares. Anyone who has planted crops, and certainly all adults, will know what "tares" are. The third is the parable of the mustard seed. All of you know what mustard is, do you not? If you do not know, you can take a look in the Bible. The fourth parable is the parable of the leaven. Now, most people know that leaven is used for fermentation, and that it is something that people use in their daily lives. The further parables, including the sixth, the parable of the treasure; the seventh, the parable of the pearl; and the eighth, the parable of the net, were all drawn and sourced from people's real lives. What kind of picture do these parables paint? It is a picture of God becoming a normal person and living alongside mankind, using the language of life, human language, to communicate with humans and to provide them with what they need. When God became flesh and lived among mankind for a long time, after He had experienced and witnessed people's various lifestyles, these experiences became His teaching material through which He transformed His divine language into human language. Of course, these things that He saw and heard in life also enriched the Son of man's human experience. When He wanted people to understand some truths, to understand some of God's will, then He could use parables similar to the ones above to tell people about God's will and His requirements of mankind. These parables were all related to people's lives; there was not a single one that was out of touch with human lives. When the Lord Jesus lived with mankind, He saw farmers tending their fields, and He knew what tares were and what leavening was; He understood that humans love treasure, so He used the metaphors of both the treasure and the pearl. In life, He frequently saw fishermen casting their nets; the Lord Jesus saw this and other activities related to human life, and He also experienced that kind of life. Just like every other normal human being, He experienced human daily routines and their eating three meals a day. He personally experienced the life of an average person, and observed the lives of others. When He observed and personally experienced all of this, what He thought of was not how to have a good life or how He could live more freely and comfortably. Instead, from His experiences of authentic human life, the Lord Jesus saw the hardship in people's lives. He saw the hardship, the wretchedness, and the sadness of people living under the domain of Satan and living a life of sin beneath Satan's corruption. While He was personally experiencing human life, He also experienced how helpless people were who were living amongst corruption, and He saw and experienced the miserable conditions of humans who lived in sin, who lost all direction amidst the torture to which they were subjected by Satan and by evil. When the Lord Jesus saw these things, did He see them with His divinity or with His humanity? His humanity really existed and was very much alive; He could experience and see all of this. But of course, He also saw these things in His essence, which is His divinity. That is, Christ Himself, the Lord Jesus who was a man, saw this, and everything He saw made

Him feel the importance and the necessity of the work He had taken on during this time that He lived in the flesh. Even though He Himself knew that the responsibility He needed to take on in the flesh was so immense, and He knew how cruel the pain would be which He would face, when He saw mankind helpless in sin, when He saw the wretchedness of their lives and their feeble struggles under the law, He felt more and more grieved, and became more and more anxious to save mankind from sin. No matter what kind of difficulties He would face or what kind of pain He would suffer, He became increasingly resolved to redeem mankind, who was living in sin. During this process, you could say that the Lord Jesus began to understand more and more clearly the work He needed to do and what He had been entrusted with. He also became increasingly eager to complete the work He was to take on—to assume all of mankind's sins, to atone for mankind so that they no longer lived in sin, and at the same time, God would be able to forgive man's sins because of the sin offering, allowing Him to continue to further His work of saving mankind. It could be said that in the Lord Jesus' heart, He was willing to offer Himself up for mankind, to sacrifice Himself. He was also willing to act as a sin offering, to be nailed to the cross, and indeed He was eager to complete this work. When He saw the miserable conditions of human life, He wanted even more to fulfill His mission as quickly as possible, without the delay of a single minute or even a single second. Feeling such urgency, He spent no thought on how great His own pain would be, nor did He harbor any further apprehension about how much humiliation He would have to endure. He held just one conviction in His heart: As long as He offered Himself up, as long as He was nailed to the cross as a sin offering, then God's will would be carried out and God would be able to commence new work. Mankind's life and their state of existence in sin would be completely transformed. His conviction and what He was determined to do were related to saving man, and He had only one objective, which was to do God's will so that God could successfully begin the next stage of His work. This was what was in the Lord Jesus' mind at the time.

Living in the flesh, God incarnate possessed normal humanity; He had the emotions and the rationality of a normal person. He knew what happiness was, what pain was, and when He saw mankind living this kind of life, He deeply felt that merely giving people some teachings, providing them with something or teaching them something, would not be enough to lead them out of sin. Neither could just having them obey the commandments redeem them from sin—only when He took on humanity's sin and became the likeness of sinful flesh could He win mankind's freedom and God's forgiveness for mankind in exchange. So after the Lord Jesus had experienced and witnessed people's lives in sin, an intense desire manifested in His heart—to allow humans to free themselves from their lives of struggling in sin. This desire made Him feel more and more that He must go to the cross and take on humanity's sins as soon and as quickly as possible. These were the thoughts of the Lord Jesus at that time, after He had lived with people and seen, heard, and felt the misery of their lives in sin. That

the incarnate God could have this kind of will for mankind, that He could express and reveal this kind of disposition—is this something an average person could have? What would an average person see, living in this type of environment? What would they think? If an average person faced all of this, would they look at problems from an elevated perspective? Definitely not! Although the outward appearance of God incarnate is exactly the same as a human, and although He learns human knowledge and speaks human language, and sometimes even expresses His ideas through mankind's own methods or ways of speaking, nevertheless, the way He sees humans and sees the essence of things is absolutely not the same as the way corrupt people see mankind and the essence of things. His perspective and the elevation at which He stands is something unattainable for a corrupt person. This is because God is truth, because the flesh that He wears also possesses the essence of God, and His thoughts and that which is expressed by His humanity are also the truth. For corrupt people, what He expresses in the flesh are provisions of the truth, and of life. These provisions are not just for one person, but for all of mankind. In any corrupt person's heart, there are only those few people who are associated with them. They care and are concerned only for this handful of people. When disaster is on the horizon, they first think of their own children, spouse, or parents. At most, a more compassionate person would spare some thought for some relative or good friend, but do the thoughts of even such a compassionate person extend further than that? No, never! Because humans are, after all, humans, and they can only look at everything from the elevation and perspective of a human being. However, God incarnate is entirely different from a corrupt human. No matter how ordinary, how normal, how lowly God's incarnate flesh is, or even with what contempt people look down on Him, His thoughts and His attitude toward mankind are things that no man could possess, that no man could imitate. He will always observe mankind from the perspective of divinity, from the elevation of His position as the Creator. He will always see mankind through the essence and the mindset of God. He absolutely cannot see mankind from the lowly elevation of an average person, or from the perspective of a corrupt person. When people look at mankind, they do so with human vision, and they use things such as human knowledge and human rules and theories as their measure. This is within the scope of what people can see with their eyes and the scope that is achievable by corrupt people. When God looks at mankind, He looks with divine vision, and He uses His essence and what He has and is as a measure. This scope includes things that people cannot see, and this is where God incarnate and corrupt humans are entirely different. This difference is determined by humans' and God's different essences—it is these different essences that determine their identities and positions as well as the perspective and elevation from which they see things. Do you see the expression and revelation of God Himself in the Lord Jesus? You could say that what the Lord Jesus did and said was related to His ministry and to God's own management work, that it was all the expression and revelation of God's essence. Although He did

have a human manifestation, His divine essence and the revelation of His divinity cannot be denied. Was this human manifestation truly a manifestation of humanity? His human manifestation was, by its very essence, entirely different from the human manifestation of corrupt people. The Lord Jesus was God incarnate. If He had truly been one of the regular, corrupt people, could He have seen mankind's life in sin from a divine perspective? Absolutely not! This is the difference between the Son of man and regular people. Corrupt people all live in sin, and when anyone sees sin, they do not have any particular feeling about it; they are all the same, just like a pig living in the mud that does not feel at all uncomfortable or dirty—on the contrary, it eats well and sleeps soundly. If someone cleans the pigsty, the pig will actually feel ill at ease, and it will not stay clean. Before long, it will once again be rolling around in the mud, completely comfortable, because it is a filthy creature. Humans see pigs as filthy, but if you clean a pig's living quarters, it does not feel any better—this is why no one keeps a pig in their house. The way humans see pigs will always be different from how pigs themselves feel, because humans and pigs are not of the same kind. And because the incarnate Son of man is not of the same kind as corrupt humans, only God incarnate can stand at a divine perspective, at the elevation of God, from where He sees mankind and everything.

What of the suffering that God experiences when He becomes flesh and lives among mankind? What is this suffering? Does anyone truly understand? Some people say that God suffers greatly, that although He is God Himself, people do not understand His essence, but tend always to treat Him like a person, causing Him to feel aggrieved and wronged—they say that, for these reasons, God's suffering truly is great. Other people say that God is innocent and without sin, but that He suffers in the same way as mankind, that He suffers persecution, slander, and indignities alongside mankind; they say He also endures the misunderstandings and the disobedience of His followers—thus, they say that God's suffering truly cannot be measured. Now, it seems that you do not truly understand God. In fact, this suffering you speak of does not count as true suffering for God, because there is suffering greater than this. Then what is true suffering for God Himself? What is true suffering for God's incarnate flesh? For God, mankind not understanding Him does not count as suffering, and neither does people having some misunderstanding of God and not seeing Him as God count as suffering. However, people often feel that God must have suffered great injustice, that during the time that God spends in the flesh, He cannot show His person to mankind and allow people to see His greatness, and that God is humbly hiding in an insignificant flesh, and that this must be a great torment for Him. People take to heart what they can understand and what they can see of God's suffering, and project all sorts of sympathy on God and often will even offer a little praise for His suffering. In reality, there is a difference; there is a gap between what people understand of God's suffering and what He truly feels. I am telling you the truth—for God, no matter whether it be God's Spirit or God's incarnate flesh, the suffering described above is not true suffering. Then what is it that God actually

suffers? Let us talk about God's suffering only from the perspective of God incarnate.

When God becomes flesh, turning into an average, normal person, living side-byside with people among mankind, can He not see and feel people's methods, laws, and philosophies for living? How do these methods and laws for living make Him feel? Does He feel loathing in His heart? Why would He feel loathing? What are mankind's methods and laws for living? What principles are they rooted in? What are they based on? Mankind's methods, laws, and so on as they relate to the way to live—all of this is created on the basis of Satan's logic, knowledge, and philosophy. Humans living under these types of laws have no humanity, no truth—they all defy the truth and are hostile to God. If we take a look at God's essence, we see that His essence is exactly the opposite of Satan's logic, knowledge, and philosophy. His essence is full of righteousness, truth, and holiness, and other realities of all positive things. What does God, who possesses this essence and lives among such a mankind, feel? What does He feel in His heart? Is it not full of pain? His heart is in pain, a pain that no person can understand or experience. This is because everything that He faces, encounters, hears, sees, and experiences is all mankind's corruption, evil, and their rebellion against and resistance to the truth. All that comes from humans is the source of His suffering. That is to say, because His essence is not the same as corrupt humans, the corruption of humans becomes the source of His greatest suffering. When God becomes flesh, is He able to find someone who shares a common language with Him? Such a person cannot be found among mankind. No one can be found who can communicate with or who can have this exchange with God—what kind of feeling would you say God has about this? The things that people discuss, love, pursue and long for all have to do with sin and evil tendencies. When God faces all of this, is it not like a knife to His heart? Faced with these things, could He have joy in His heart? Could He find consolation? Those who are living with Him are humans full of rebelliousness and evil-how could His heart not suffer? How great really is this suffering, and who cares about it? Who takes heed? And who is capable of appreciating it? People have no way of understanding God's heart. His suffering is something that people are particularly unable to appreciate, and humanity's coldness and numbness deepens God's suffering even more.

There are some people who often sympathize with Christ's plight because there is a verse in the Bible that reads: "The foxes have holes, and the birds have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." When people hear this, they take it to heart and believe that this is the greatest suffering that God endures, and the greatest suffering that Christ endures. Now, looking at it from the perspective of the facts, is that the case? No; God does not believe these difficulties to be suffering. He has never cried out against injustice because of His difficulties of the flesh, and He has never made humans repay or reward Him with anything. However, when He witnesses everything about mankind and the corrupt lives and the evil of corrupt humans, when He witnesses that mankind is in Satan's grasp and imprisoned by Satan and cannot escape, that people living in sin

do not know what the truth is, He cannot tolerate all of these sins. His loathing of humans increases by the day, but He has to endure all of this. This is God's great suffering. God cannot fully express even the voice of His heart or His emotions among His followers, and no one among His followers can truly understand His suffering. No one even tries to understand or to comfort His heart, which endures this suffering day after day, year after year, and time and time again. What do you see in all of this? God does not require anything of humans in return for what He has given, but because of God's essence, He absolutely cannot tolerate mankind's evil, corruption, and sin, and instead feels extreme loathing and hatred, which leads to God's heart and His flesh enduring unending suffering. Have you seen this? Most likely, none of you could see this, because none of you can truly understand God. Over time, you should gradually experience it for yourselves.

Next, let us look at the following passages of scripture:

9. Jesus Performs Miracles

a. Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

Jhn 6:8–13 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, He said to His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten.

b. The Resurrection of Lazarus Glorifies God

Jhn 11:43–44 And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them, Loose him, and let him go.

Among the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus, we have selected only these two because they are adequate to demonstrate what I want to speak about here. These two miracles are truly astonishing and highly representative of the miracles the Lord Jesus performed during the Age of Grace.

First, let us take a look at the first passage: Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand.

What is the idea of "five loaves and two fish"? Ordinarily, how many people could be sufficiently fed with five loaves of bread and two fish? If you base your measurement on the appetite of an average person, this would only be enough for two people. This is the idea of "five loaves and two fish" at its most basic. However, in this passage, how many people were fed by five loaves and two fish? The following is what is recorded in the

Scripture: "Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand." Compared to five loaves and two fish, is five thousand a large number? What does it show that this number is so large? From a human perspective, dividing five loaves and two fish between five thousand people would be impossible, because the difference between people and food is too great. Even if every person only had one tiny bite, it still would not be enough for five thousand people. But here, the Lord Jesus performed a miracle—He not only ensured that five thousand people could eat their fill, but there was even food left over. The Scripture reads: "When they were filled, He said to His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten." This miracle enabled people to see the identity and status of the Lord Jesus, and to see that nothing is impossible for God—in this way, they saw the truth of God's omnipotence. Five loaves and two fish were enough to feed five thousand, but if there had not been any food, would God have been able to feed five thousand people? Of course He could have! This was a miracle, so inevitably people felt it was incomprehensible, incredible and mysterious, but for God, doing such a thing was nothing. Since this was something ordinary for God, why should it be singled out now for interpretation? Because what lies behind this miracle is the Lord Jesus' will, which has never before been perceived by mankind.

First, let us try to understand what type of people these five thousand were. Were they followers of the Lord Jesus? From the Scripture, we know that they were not His followers. Did they know who the Lord Jesus was? Certainly not! At the very least, they did not know that the person standing in front of them was Christ, or maybe some people only knew what His name was and knew or had heard something about things He had done. Their curiosity about the Lord Jesus had merely been roused when they heard stories about Him, but you certainly could not say that they followed Him, much less understood Him. When the Lord Jesus saw these five thousand people, they were hungry and could only think of filling their stomachs, so it was in this context that the Lord Jesus satisfied their desire. When He satisfied their desire, what was in His heart? What was His attitude toward these people that only wanted to eat their fill? At this time, the Lord Jesus' thoughts and His attitude were in relation to God's disposition and essence. Facing these five thousand people with empty stomachs who only wanted to eat a full meal, facing these people full of curiosity and hope for Him, the Lord Jesus only thought of utilizing this miracle to bestow grace upon them. However, He did not raise His hopes that they would become His followers, for He knew that they just wanted to join the fun and to eat their fill, so He made the best of what He had there, and used five loaves of bread and two fish to feed five thousand people. He opened the eyes of these people who enjoyed seeing exciting things, who wanted to witness miracles, and they saw with their own eyes the things that God incarnate could accomplish. Although the Lord Jesus used something tangible to satisfy their curiosity, He already knew in His heart that these five thousand people just wanted to have a good meal, so He did not preach to them or say anything at all—He just let them see this miracle as it happened. He absolutely could not treat these people in the same way as He treated His disciples who truly followed Him, but in God's heart, all creatures are under His rule, and He would allow all creatures in His sight to enjoy the grace of God when it was necessary. Even though these people did not know who He was and did not understand Him or have any particular impression of Him or gratitude toward Him even after they had eaten the loaves and fish, this was not something that God took issue with—He gave these people a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the grace of God. Some people say that God is principled in what He does, that He does not watch over or protect nonbelievers, and that, in particular, He does not allow them to enjoy His grace. Is that actually the case? In God's eyes, as long as they are living creatures that He Himself created, He will manage and care for them, and in manifold ways He will treat them, plan for them, and rule them. These are the thoughts and attitude of God toward all things.

Although the five thousand people who ate the loaves of bread and the fish did not plan to follow the Lord Jesus, He made no exacting demands of them; once they had eaten their fill, do you know what the Lord Jesus did? Did He preach to them at all? Where did He go after doing this? The scriptures do not record that the Lord Jesus said anything to them, just that He left quietly when He had performed His miracle. So did He make any requirements of these people? Was there any hatred? No, here were none of these. He simply no longer wanted to pay any mind to these people who could not follow Him, and at this time His heart was in pain. Because He had seen the depravity of mankind and He had felt mankind's rejection of Him, when He saw these people and He was with them, He was saddened by human obtuseness and ignorance, and His heart was in pain, all He wanted was to leave these people as quickly as possible. The Lord did not make any requirements of them in His heart, He did not want to pay them any mind, and even more, He did not want to expend His energy on them. He knew that they could not follow Him, but in spite of all this, His attitude toward them was still very clear. He just wanted to treat them kindly, to bestow grace upon them, and indeed this was God's attitude toward every creature under His rule—to treat every creature kindly, to provide for them and nourish them. For the very reason that the Lord Jesus was God incarnate, He very naturally revealed God's own essence and treated these people kindly. He treated them with a heart of benevolence and tolerance, and with such a heart He showed them kindness. No matter how these people saw the Lord Jesus, and no matter what kind of outcome there would be. He treated every creature based on His position as the Lord of all creation. Everything that He revealed was, without exception, God's disposition, and what He has and is. The Lord Jesus quietly did this thing, and then quietly left—what aspect of God's disposition is this? Could you say that this is God's lovingkindness? Could you say that this is God's selflessness? Is this something

that a regular person is capable of? Definitely not! In essence, who were these five thousand people that the Lord Jesus fed with five loaves and two fish? Could you say that they were people who were compatible with Him? Could you say that they were all hostile to God? It can be said with certainty that they absolutely were not compatible with the Lord, and their essence was absolutely hostile to God. But how did God treat them? He used a method to defuse people's hostility toward God—this method is called "kindness." That is, although the Lord Jesus saw these people as sinners, in God's eyes they were nevertheless His creation, so He still treated these sinners kindly. This is God's tolerance, and this tolerance is determined by God's own identity and essence. So, this is something of which no human created by God is capable—only God can do this.

When you are able to truly appreciate God's thoughts and attitude toward mankind, when you can truly understand God's emotions and concern for each being of creation, you will be able to understand the devotion and the love spent on every single one of the people created by the Creator. When this happens, you will use two words to describe God's love. What are those two words? Some people say "selfless," and some people say "philanthropic." Of these two, "philanthropic" is the word least suited to describe God's love. This is a word that people use to describe someone who is magnanimous or broad-minded. I loathe this word, because it refers to dispensing charity at random, indiscriminately, with no consideration for principle. It is an overly sentimental inclination, which is common to foolish and confused people. When this word is used to describe God's love, there is inevitably a blasphemous connotation. I have here two words that more aptly describe God's love. What are they? The first one is "immense." Is this word not very evocative? The second is "vast." There is real meaning behind these words which I use to describe God's love. Taken literally, "immense" describes a thing's volume or capacity, but regardless of how big that thing is, it is something that people can touch and see. This is because it exists—it is not an abstract object, but something that can give people ideas in a relatively accurate and practical way. Whether you look at it from a two- or a three-dimensional perspective, you do not need to imagine its existence, because it is a thing that actually exists in a real way. Even though using the word, "immense," to describe God's love can feel like an attempt at quantifying His love, it also gives the feeling that His love is unquantifiable. I say that God's love can be quantified because His love is not empty, and nor is it a thing of legend. Rather, it is something shared by all things under God's rule, something that is enjoyed by all creatures to varying degrees and from different perspectives. Although people cannot see or touch it, this love brings sustenance and life to all things as it is revealed, bit by bit, in their lives, and they count and bear witness to God's love that they enjoy in each passing moment. I say that God's love is unquantifiable because the mystery of God providing for and nourishing all things is something that is difficult for humans to fathom, as are God's thoughts for all things, and particularly those for mankind. That is to say, no one knows the blood and tears the Creator has poured out for mankind. No one can

comprehend, no one can understand the depth or weight of the love that the Creator has for mankind whom He created with His own hands. Describing God's love as immense is to help people appreciate and understand its breadth and the truth of its existence. It is also so that people can more deeply comprehend the actual meaning of the word "Creator," and so that people can gain a deeper understanding of the true meaning of the appellation, "creation." What does the word "vast" usually describe? It is generally used to describe the ocean or the universe, for example: "the vast universe," or "the vast ocean." The expansiveness and quiet depth of the universe are beyond human understanding; it is something that captures man's imagination, something for which they feel great admiration. Its mystery and profundity are within sight, but beyond reach. When you think of the ocean, you think of its breadth—it looks limitless, and you can feel its mysteriousness and its great capacity to hold things. This is why I have used the word "vast" to describe God's love, to help people feel how precious it is, to feel the profound beauty of His love, and that the power of God's love is infinite and wide-ranging. I used this word to help people feel the holiness of His love, and the dignity and unoffendableness of God that is revealed through His love. Now do you think "vast" is a suitable word for describing God's love? Can God's love measure up to these two words, "immense" and "vast"? Absolutely! In human language, these two words alone are somewhat apt, and are relatively close to describing God's love. Do you not think so? If I had you describe God's love, would you use these two words? Most likely you would not, because your understanding and appreciation of God's love is limited to the scope of a two-dimensional perspective, and has not ascended to the height of threedimensional space. So if I had you describe God's love, you would feel that you lack the words or perhaps you would even be rendered speechless. The two words that I have talked about today may be difficult for you to understand, or maybe you simply do not agree. This only shows that your appreciation and understanding of God's love is superficial and limited to a narrow scope. I have said before that God is selfless; you remember this word, "selfless." Could it be that God's love can only be described as selfless? Is this not too narrow a scope? You should ponder this issue more, so that you may gain something from it.

The above is what we saw of God's disposition and His essence from the first miracle. Even though this is a story that people have been reading for several thousand years, it has a simple plot, and allows people to see a simple phenomenon, yet in this simple plot we can see something more valuable, which is God's disposition and what He has and is. These things that He has and is represent God Himself and are an expression of God's own thoughts. When God expresses His thoughts, it is an expression of the voice of His heart. He hopes that there will be people who can understand Him, know Him and comprehend His will, and who can hear the voice of His heart and will be able to actively cooperate to satisfy His will. These things that the Lord Jesus did were a voiceless expression of God.

Next, let us look at the following passage: The Resurrection of Lazarus Glorifies God. What impressions do you have after reading this passage? The significance of this miracle that the Lord Jesus performed was much greater than the previous one, because no miracle is more astounding than bringing a dead man back from the grave. In that era, it was extremely significant that the Lord Jesus did something like this. Because God had become flesh, people could only see His physical appearance, His practical side, and His insignificant aspect. Even if some people saw and understood something of His character or some special abilities that He appeared to possess, no one knew where the Lord Jesus came from, who He truly was in His essence, and what other things He was actually capable of doing. All of this was unknown to mankind. So many people wanted to find proof to answer these questions about the Lord Jesus, and to know the truth. Could God do something to prove His own identity? For God, this was a breeze—it was a piece of cake. He could do something anywhere, anytime to prove His identity and essence, but God had His way of doing things—with a plan, and in steps. He did not do things indiscriminately, but rather looked for the right time and the right opportunity to do something which He would allow man to see, something that truly was imbued with meaning. In this way, He proved His authority and identity. So then, could the resurrection of Lazarus prove the Lord Jesus' identity? Let us look at the following passage of scripture: "And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth...." When the Lord Jesus did this, He said just one thing: "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus then came out from his tomb this was accomplished because of just a few words uttered by the Lord. During this time, the Lord Jesus did not set up an altar, and He did not carry out any other actions. He just said this one thing. Should this be called a miracle or a command? Or was it some sort of wizardry? On the surface, it seems it could be called a miracle, and if you look at it from a modern perspective, of course you could still call it a miracle. However, it certainly could not be considered magic of the kind that is supposed to call a soul back from the dead, and it absolutely was not wizardry, of any sort. It is correct to say that this miracle was the most normal, tiny demonstration of the Creator's authority. This is the authority and power of God. God has the authority to have a person die, to have his spirit leave his body and return to Hades, or wherever else it should go. The timing of a person's death, and the place they will go after death—these are determined by God. He can make these decisions anytime and anywhere, unconstrained by humans, events, objects, space, or geography. If He wants to do it, He can do it, because all things and living beings are under His rule, and all things are born, live, and perish by His word and His authority. He can resurrect a dead man, and this too is something He can do anytime, anywhere. This is the authority that only the Creator possesses.

When the Lord Jesus did things like bringing Lazarus back from the dead, His goal was to give proof for humans and for Satan to see, and to let humans and Satan know that everything about mankind, mankind's life and death are determined by God, and

that even though He had become flesh, He remained in command of the physical world which can be seen as well as the spiritual world which humans cannot see. This was so that mankind and Satan would know that everything about mankind is not under the command of Satan. This was a revelation and demonstration of God's authority, and it was also a way for God to send a message to all things, that mankind's life and death are in God's hands. The Lord Jesus' resurrection of Lazarus was one of the ways in which the Creator teaches and instructs mankind. It was a concrete action in which He used His power and authority to instruct and provide for mankind. It was a way, without using words, for the Creator to allow mankind to see the truth that He is in command of all things. It was a way for Him to tell mankind through practical actions that there is no salvation other than through Him. This silent means which He used to instruct mankind is everlasting, indelible, bringing to human hearts a shock and enlightenment that can never fade. The resurrection of Lazarus glorified God—this has a deep impact on every single one of God's followers. It firmly fixes in every person who deeply understands this event the understanding, the vision that only God can command mankind's life and death. Although God has this type of authority, and although He sent a message about His sovereignty over mankind's life and death through the resurrection of Lazarus, this was not His primary work. God never does something without meaning. Every single thing He does has great value and is a surpassing jewel in a storehouse of treasures. He absolutely would not make "having a person come out of their tomb" the primary or the sole goal or item of His work. God does not do anything that is without meaning. The resurrection of Lazarus as a singular event is adequate to demonstrate God's authority and to prove the identity of the Lord Jesus. This is why the Lord Jesus did not repeat this type of miracle. God does things according to His own principles. In human language, it could be said that God occupies His mind only with serious matters. That is, when God does things, He does not stray from the purpose of His work. He knows what work He wants to carry out in this stage, what He wants to accomplish, and He will work strictly according to His plan. If a corrupt person had that kind of ability, he would just be thinking of ways to reveal his ability so that others would know how formidable he was, so they would bow down to him, so he could control them and devour them. This is the evil that comes from Satan—this is called corruption. God does not have such a disposition, and He does not have such an essence. His purpose in doing things is not to show Himself off, but to provide mankind with more revelation and guidance, and this is why people see very few examples in the Bible of this type of occurrence. This is not to say that the Lord Jesus' powers were limited, or that He was incapable of such things. It is simply that God did not want to do it, because the Lord Jesus' resurrection of Lazarus had very practical significance, and also because the primary work of God becoming flesh was not to perform miracles, was not to bring people back from the dead, but was the work of redemption for mankind. So, much of the work that the Lord Jesus completed was teaching people, providing for them, and helping them, and events such as resurrecting

Lazarus were merely a small portion of the ministry that the Lord Jesus carried out. Even more, you could say that "showing off" is not a part of God's essence, so the Lord Jesus was not intentionally exercising restraint by not displaying more miracles, nor was this due to environmental limitations, and it certainly was not due to a lack of power.

When the Lord Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, He used only these few words: "Lazarus, come forth." He said nothing aside from this. So, what do these words demonstrate? They demonstrate that God can accomplish anything by speaking, including resurrecting a dead man. When God created all things, when He created the world, He did so with words—spoken commands, words with authority, and in this way all things were created, and thus, it was accomplished. These few words spoken by the Lord Jesus were just like the words spoken by God when He created the heavens and earth and all things; in the same way, they held the authority of God and the power of the Creator. All things were formed and stood fast because of words from God's mouth, and in the same way, Lazarus walked out from his tomb because of the words from the Lord Jesus' mouth. This was the authority of God, demonstrated and realized in His incarnate flesh. This type of authority and ability belonged to the Creator, and to the Son of man in whom the Creator was realized. This is the understanding taught to mankind by God bringing Lazarus back from the dead. Now, we will finish our discussion of this topic here. Next, let us read some more from the scriptures.

10. The Pharisees' Judgment on Jesus

Mak 3:21–22 And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He has Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casts He out devils.

11. Jesus' Rebuke to the Pharisees

Mat 12:31–32 Why I say to you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Mat 23:13–15 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

The content of the two passages above is different. Let us first take a look at the first passage: The Pharisees' Judgment on Jesus.

In the Bible, the Pharisees' appraisal of Jesus Himself and the things that He did was: "... they said, He is beside Himself. ... He has Beelzebub, and by the prince of the

devils casts He out devils" (Mak 3:21–22). The scribes' and Pharisees' judgment of the Lord Jesus was not them merely imitating other people's words, and neither was it baseless conjecture—it was the conclusion that they drew about the Lord Jesus from what they saw and heard of His actions. Although their conclusion was ostensibly made in the name of justice and appeared to people as if it were well-founded, the arrogance with which they judged the Lord Jesus was difficult for even them to contain. The frenzied energy of their hatred for the Lord Jesus exposed their own wild ambitions and their evil satanic countenances, as well as their malevolent nature with which they resisted God. These things that they said in their judgment of the Lord Jesus were driven by their wild ambitions, jealousy, and the ugly and malevolent nature of their hostility toward God and the truth. They did not investigate the source of the Lord Jesus' actions, nor did they investigate the essence of what He said or did. Rather, blindly, in a state of crazed agitation, and with deliberate malice, they attacked and discredited what He had done. They went so far as to willfully discredit His Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit which is God's Spirit. This is what they meant when they said, "He is beside Himself," "Beelzebub," and "the prince of the devils." That is to say, they said that the Spirit of God was Beelzebub and the prince of the devils. They characterized as madness the work of God's Spirit incarnate, which had clothed Himself in flesh. They not only blasphemed God's Spirit as Beelzebub and the prince of the devils, but also condemned God's work and condemned and blasphemed the Lord Jesus Christ. The essence of their resistance and blasphemy of God was entirely the same as the essence of the resistance and blasphemy of God given by Satan and the demons. They did not just represent corrupt humans, but more so they were the embodiment of Satan. They were a channel for Satan amongst mankind, and they were the accomplices and lackeys of Satan. The essence of their blasphemy and their denigration of the Lord Jesus Christ was their struggle with God for status, their contest with God, and their unending testing of God. The essence of their resistance to God and their attitude of hostility toward Him, as well as their words and their thoughts, directly blasphemed and angered God's Spirit. Thus, God determined a reasonable judgment based on what they said and did, and God determined their deeds to be the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This sin is unforgivable in both this world and the world to come, as is borne out in the following passage of scripture: "The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven to men," and, "whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Today, let us talk about the true meaning of these words from God: "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." That is, let us demystify how God fulfills the words: "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

Everything that we have talked about is related to God's disposition and His attitude toward people, events, and things. Naturally, the two passages above are no exception. Did you notice anything in these two passages of scripture? Some people say they see

God's anger in them. Some people say they see the side of God's disposition that does not tolerate mankind's offense, and that if people do something that is blasphemous to God, then they will not receive His forgiveness. Despite the fact that people see and perceive God's anger and intolerance of mankind's offense in these two passages, they still do not truly understand His attitude. Implicit in these two passages are hidden references to God's true attitude and His approach toward those who blaspheme and anger Him. His attitude and approach demonstrate the true meaning of the following passage: "Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." When people blaspheme God and when they anger Him, He issues a verdict, and this verdict is an outcome issued by Him. It is described in this way in the Bible: "Why I say to you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven to men" (Mat 12:31), and "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Mat 23:13). However, is it recorded in the Bible what the outcome was for those scribes and Pharisees, as well as for those people who said the Lord Jesus was mad after He said these things? Is it recorded that they suffered any punishment? No—this can be said for certain. Saying "No" here is not to say that there was no such recording, but in fact only that there was no outcome that could be seen with human eyes. To say that "it was not recorded" elucidates the issue of God's attitude and principles for handling certain things. God does not turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to people who blaspheme or resist Him, or even those who malign Him—people who intentionally attack, malign, and curse Him but rather He has a clear attitude toward them. He despises these people, and He condemns them in His heart. He even openly declares what their outcome will be, so that people know that He has a clear attitude toward those who blaspheme Him, and so that they know how He will determine their outcome. However, after God said these things, people could rarely see the truth of how God would handle those people, and they could not understand the principles behind the outcome and verdict that God issued to them. That is to say, people cannot see the particular approach and methods God has for handling them. This has to do with God's principles for doing things. God uses the occurrence of facts to deal with the evil behavior of some people. That is, He does not announce their sin and does not determine their outcome, but rather directly uses the occurrence of facts to dole out their punishment and just retribution. When these facts happen, it is people's flesh that suffers punishment, meaning that the punishment is something that can be seen with human eyes. When dealing with some people's evil behavior, God just curses them with words and His anger also comes upon them, but the punishment they receive may be something people cannot see. Nonetheless, this type of outcome may be even more serious than the outcomes that people can see, such as being punished or killed. This is because under the circumstances that God has determined not to save this type of person, to no longer show mercy or have tolerance for them and to provide them with no more opportunities, then the attitude that He takes

toward them is one of putting them aside. What is the meaning here of "putting aside"? The basic meaning of this term is to put something to one side, to ignore and no longer pay attention to it. But here, when God puts someone aside, there are two different explanations of its meaning: The first explanation is that He has given that person's life and everything about that person over to Satan to deal with, and God would no longer be responsible and would no longer manage that person. Whether that person be mad or stupid, or whether they be dead or alive, or if they have descended into hell for their punishment, none of this would have anything to do with God. That would mean that such a creature would have no relation to the Creator. The second explanation is that God has determined that He Himself wants to do something with this person, with His own hands. It is possible that He will utilize this person's service, or that He will use them as a foil. It is possible that He will have a special way of dealing with this type of person, a special way of treating them, just like with Paul, for example. This is the principle and attitude in God's heart by which He has determined to deal with this kind of person. So when people resist God and malign and blaspheme Him, if they aggravate His disposition, or if they push God past the limit of His tolerance, then the consequences do not bear thinking about. The most severe consequence is that God hands their lives and everything about them over to Satan once and for all. They will not be forgiven for all of eternity. This means that this person has become food in Satan's mouth, a toy in its hand, and from then on God has nothing more to do with them. Can you imagine what misery it was when Satan tempted Job? Even under the condition that Satan was not permitted to harm Job's life, Job still suffered greatly. And is it not even more difficult to imagine the ravages which would be inflicted by Satan upon someone who has been completely handed over to Satan, who is completely within Satan's grasp, who has completely lost God's care and mercy, who is no longer under the Creator's rule, who has been stripped of the right to worship Him and the right to be a creature under God's rule, and whose relationship with the Lord of creation has been completely severed? Satan's persecution of Job was something that could be seen with human eyes, but if God hands over a person's life to Satan, the consequences are beyond the human imagination. For example, some people may be reborn as a cow, or a donkey, while some may be occupied and possessed by unclean, evil spirits, and so on. Such are the outcomes of some of the people who are handed over to Satan by God. From the outside, it looks like those people who ridiculed, maligned, condemned, and blasphemed the Lord Jesus did not suffer any consequences. However, the truth is that God has an approach for dealing with everything. He may not use clear language to tell people the outcome of how He deals with every type of person. Sometimes He does not speak directly, but rather acts directly. That He does not speak about it does not mean that there is no outcome—in fact, in such a case it is possible that the outcome is even more serious. From the outside, it may seem as though there are some to whom God does not explicitly speak about His attitude, but in fact, God has not wanted to pay any mind

to them for a long time. He does not want to see them anymore. Because of the things they have done and their behavior, because of their nature and essence, God only wants them to disappear from His sight, wants to hand them over directly to Satan, to give their spirit, soul, and body to Satan and to allow Satan to do whatever it wants with them. It is clear to what extent God hates them, to what extent He is disgusted by them. If a person angers God to the point that God does not even want to see them again and is prepared to completely give up on them, to the point where He does not even want to deal with them Himself—if it gets to the point where He will hand them over to Satan for it to do as it will, to allow Satan to control, consume, and treat them in whatever way it pleases—then this person is utterly finished. Their right to be a human has been permanently revoked, and their right to be a creature of God's creation has come to an end. Is this not the most severe kind of punishment?

All of the above is a complete explanation of the words: "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come," and it also serves as a simple commentary on these passages from the scriptures. I believe you all have an understanding of it now.

Now let us read the following passages from the Scripture.

12. Jesus' Words to His Disciples After His Resurrection

Jhn 20:26–29 And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the middle, and said, Peace be to you. Then said He to Thomas, Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, My LORD and my God. Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Jhn 21:16–17 He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of John, love you Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, love you Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Love you Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

What these passages recount are certain things that the Lord Jesus did and said to His disciples after His resurrection. First, let us take a look at any differences there might be in the Lord Jesus before and after the resurrection. Was He still the same Lord Jesus of days past? The scriptures contain the following line describing the Lord Jesus after the resurrection: "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the middle, and said, Peace be to you." It is very clear that the Lord Jesus at that time no longer inhabited a fleshly body, but that He was now in a spiritual body. This was because He had transcended the limitations of the flesh; even though the door was closed, He could still come amongst the people and allow them to see Him. This is the greatest difference

between the Lord Jesus after the resurrection and the Lord Jesus living in the flesh before the resurrection. Even though there was no difference between the appearance of the spiritual body of that moment and the appearance of the Lord Jesus as it was before, the Lord Jesus in that moment had become one that felt like a stranger to the people, because He had become a spiritual body after being resurrected from the dead, and compared to His previous flesh, this spiritual body was more puzzling and confusing to people. It also created more distance between the Lord Jesus and the people, and people felt in their hearts that the Lord Jesus in that moment had become more mysterious. These cognitions and feelings on the part of the people suddenly brought them back to an age of believing in a God that could not be seen or touched. So, the first thing that the Lord Jesus did after His resurrection was to allow everyone to see Him, to confirm that He exists, and to confirm the fact of His resurrection. In addition, this action restored His relationship with the people back to the way it was when He was working in the flesh, when He was the Christ whom they could see and touch. One outcome of this is that the people had no doubt whatever that the Lord Jesus had been resurrected from death after being nailed to the cross, and they also had no doubt in the Lord Jesus' work to redeem mankind. Another outcome is that the fact of the Lord Jesus appearing to people after His resurrection and allowing people to see and touch Him firmly secured mankind in the Age of Grace, ensuring that, from this time on, people would not return to the previous Age of Law on the supposed basis that the Lord Jesus had "disappeared" or that He had "left without a word." He thus ensured that they would continue to move forward, following the Lord Jesus' teachings and the work He had done. Thus, a new phase in the work in the Age of Grace was formally opened, and from that moment on, the people who had been living under the law formally emerged from the law and entered into a new era, a new beginning. These are the multi-faceted meanings of the Lord Jesus' appearance to mankind after the resurrection.

Since the Lord Jesus was now inhabiting a spiritual body, how could people touch Him and see Him? This question touches upon the significance of the Lord Jesus' appearance to mankind. Did you notice anything in the passages of scripture that we just read? Generally, spiritual bodies cannot be seen or touched, and after the resurrection the work that the Lord Jesus had taken on had already been completed. So in theory, He had absolutely no need to return amongst the people in His original image to meet with them, but the appearance of the Lord Jesus' spiritual body to people like Thomas made the significance of His appearance more concrete, so that it penetrated more deeply into the people's hearts. When He came to Thomas, He let Thomas the doubter touch His hand, and told him: "Reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." These words and actions were not things that the Lord Jesus wanted to say and do only after He had been resurrected; in fact, they were things that He wanted to say and do before He had been nailed to the cross, because Thomas' doubts had not begun only then, but had been with him the entire time he had

been following the Lord Jesus. It is evident that, before He had been nailed to the cross, the Lord Jesus already had an understanding of people such as Thomas. So what can we see from this? He was still the same Lord Jesus after His resurrection. His essence had not changed. However, here was the Lord Jesus who had been resurrected from the dead and returned from the spiritual world with His original image, with His original disposition, and with His understanding of mankind from His time in the flesh, so He went to Thomas first and let Thomas touch His rib, to not only let Thomas see His spiritual body after resurrection, but to let Thomas touch and feel the existence of His spiritual body, and completely let go of his doubts. Before the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, Thomas always doubted that He was Christ, and was incapable of belief. His faith in God was established only on the basis of what he could see with his own eyes, what he could touch with his own hands. The Lord Jesus had a good understanding of the faith of this type of person. They only believed in God in heaven, and did not believe at all in the One sent by God, or the Christ in the flesh, and nor would they accept Him. In order for Thomas to acknowledge and believe in the existence of the Lord Jesus and that He truly was God incarnate, He allowed Thomas to reach out his hand and touch His rib. Was Thomas' doubting any different before and after the Lord Jesus' resurrection? He was always doubting, and except by the Lord Jesus' spiritual body personally appearing to him and allowing him to touch the nail marks on His body, there was no way that anyone could resolve his doubts and make him let go of them. So, from the time the Lord Jesus allowed Thomas to touch His rib and let him really feel the existence of the nail marks, Thomas' doubt disappeared, and he truly knew that the Lord Jesus had been resurrected, and he acknowledged and believed that the Lord Jesus was the true Christ and God incarnate. Although at this time Thomas no longer doubted, he had lost forever the chance to meet with Christ. He had lost forever the chance to be together with Him, to follow Him, to know Him. He had lost the chance for Christ to perfect him. The Lord Jesus' appearance and His words provided a conclusion and a verdict on the faith of those who were full of doubts. He used His actual words and actions to tell the doubters, to tell those who only believed in God in heaven but did not believe in Christ: God did not commend their belief, nor did He commend them for following Him while doubting Him. The day when they fully believed in God and Christ could only be the day that God completed His great work. Of course, that day was also the day that a verdict was made upon their doubt. Their attitude toward Christ determined their fate, and their stubborn doubt meant that their faith bore them no fruit, and their hardness meant that their hopes were in vain. Because their belief in God in heaven was fed on illusions, and their doubt toward Christ was actually their true attitude toward God, even though they touched the nail marks on the Lord Jesus' body, their faith was still useless and their outcome could only be described as drawing water with a bamboo basket—all in vain. What the Lord Jesus said to Thomas was also very clearly His way of telling every person: The resurrected Lord Jesus is the Lord Jesus, who spent thirty-three and a half years working

among mankind. Although He had been nailed to the cross and experienced the valley of the shadow of death, and though He had experienced resurrection, He had undergone no change in any aspect. Although He now had nail marks on His body, and although He had been resurrected and walked out from the grave, His disposition, His understanding of mankind, and His intentions toward mankind had not changed in the slightest. Also, He was telling people that He had come down from the cross, triumphed over sin, overcome hardships, and triumphed over death. The nail marks were just the evidence of His victory over Satan, evidence of being a sin offering to successfully redeem all of mankind. He was telling people that He had already taken on mankind's sins and that He had completed His work of redemption. When He returned to see His disciples. He told them this message by means of His appearance: "I am still alive, I still exist; today I am truly standing in front of you so that you can see and touch Me. I will always be with you." The Lord Jesus also wanted to use the case of Thomas as a warning for future people: Although you can neither see nor touch the Lord Jesus in your faith in Him, you are blessed because of your true faith, and you can see the Lord Jesus because of your true faith, and this kind of person is blessed.

These words recorded in the Bible that the Lord Jesus spoke when He appeared to Thomas are of great help to all people in the Age of Grace. His appearance to Thomas and the words He spoke to him have had a profound impact on the generations that came after; they hold everlasting significance. Thomas represents a type of person who believes in God yet doubts God. They are of a suspicious nature, have sinister hearts, are treacherous, and do not believe in the things that God can accomplish. They do not believe in God's omnipotence and His sovereignty, and neither do they believe in God incarnate. However, the Lord Jesus' resurrection flew in the face of these traits that they have, and it also provided them with an opportunity to discover their own doubt, to recognize their own doubt, and to acknowledge their own treachery, thus coming to truly believe in the existence and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. What happened with Thomas was a warning and a caution for later generations so that more people could warn themselves not to be doubters like Thomas, and that if they did fill themselves with doubt, then they would sink into the darkness. If you follow God, but just like Thomas, always want to touch the Lord's rib and feel His nail marks to confirm, to verify, to speculate on whether or not God exists, then God will forsake you. So, the Lord Jesus requires people to not be like Thomas, only believing what they can see with their own eyes, but to be pure, honest people, to not harbor doubts toward God, but to simply believe in and follow Him. People like this are blessed. This is a very small requirement the Lord Jesus makes of people, and it is a warning for His followers.

The above is the Lord Jesus' attitude toward those who are full of doubts. So what did the Lord Jesus say to and do for those who are able to honestly believe in and follow Him? This is what we are going to look at next, through a dialogue between the Lord Jesus and Peter.

In this conversation, the Lord Jesus repeatedly asked Peter one thing: "Simon, son of John, love you Me?" This is a higher standard which the Lord Jesus required from people like Peter after His resurrection, people who truly believe in Christ and strive to love the Lord. This question was a sort of investigation and interrogation, but even more, it was a requirement and an expectation of people like Peter. The Lord Jesus used this method of questioning so that people would reflect on themselves and look into themselves and ask: What are the Lord Jesus' requirements for people? Do I love the Lord? Am I a person who loves God? How should I love God? Even though the Lord Jesus only asked this question of Peter, the truth is that in His heart, by asking Peter these questions, He wanted to use this opportunity to ask this same type of question of more people who seek to love God. It is only that Peter was blessed to act as the representative of this type of person, to receive this questioning from the Lord Jesus' own mouth.

Compared to the following words, which the Lord Jesus said to Thomas after His resurrection: "Reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing," His thrice repeated questioning of Peter: "Simon, son of John, love you Me?" allows people to better feel the sternness of the Lord Jesus' attitude, and the urgency He felt during His questioning. As for Thomas the doubter, with his deceitful nature, the Lord Jesus allowed him to reach out his hand and touch the nail marks in His body, which led him to believe that the Lord Jesus was the Son of man resurrected, and to acknowledge the Lord Jesus' identity as Christ. And although the Lord Jesus did not sternly rebuke Thomas and nor did He verbally express any clear judgment of him, He nonetheless used practical actions to let Thomas know that He understood him, while also displaying His attitude and determination toward that type of person. The Lord Jesus' requirements and expectations of that type of person cannot be seen from what He said, because people like Thomas simply do not have a single shred of true faith. The Lord Jesus' requirements for them only go so far, but the attitude He revealed toward people like Peter is entirely different. He did not require that Peter reach out his hand and touch His nail marks, nor did He say to Peter: "Be not faithless, but believing." Instead, He repeatedly asked Peter the same question. The question was thoughtprovoking and meaningful, a question that cannot help but cause every follower of Christ to feel remorse and fear, but also to feel the Lord Jesus' anxious, sorrowful mood. And when they are in great pain and suffering, they are more able to understand the Lord Jesus Christ's concern and His care; they realize His earnest teaching and strict requirements of pure, honest people. The Lord Jesus' question allows people to feel that the Lord's expectations of people revealed in these simple words are not merely to believe in and follow Him, but to achieve having love, loving your Lord and your God. This kind of love is caring and obeying. It is humans living for God, dying for God, dedicating everything to God, and expending and giving everything for God. This kind of love is also giving God comfort, allowing Him to enjoy testimony and to be at rest. It is

mankind's repayment to God, man's responsibility, obligation and duty, and it is a way that people must follow for their entire lives. These three questions were a requirement and an exhortation that the Lord Jesus made of Peter and all people who would be made perfect. It was these three questions that led and motivated Peter to follow his path in life to the end, and it was these questions at the Lord Jesus' parting that led Peter to start on his path of being made perfect, that led him, because of his love for the Lord, to care for the Lord's heart, to obey the Lord, to offer comfort to the Lord, and to offer up his whole life and his whole being because of this love.

During the Age of Grace, God's work was primarily for two types of people. The first was the type of person who believed in and followed Him, who could keep His commandments and bear the cross, and who could hold to the way of the Age of Grace. This type of person would gain God's blessing and enjoy God's grace. The second type of person was like Peter, someone who could be made perfect. So, after the Lord Jesus was resurrected, He first did these two most meaningful things. One was done with Thomas, the other with Peter. What do these two things represent? Do they represent God's true intentions of saving mankind? Do they represent God's sincerity toward mankind? The work He did with Thomas was to warn people not to be doubters, but to simply believe. The work He did with Peter was to strengthen the faith of people like Peter, and to make clear His requirements of this type of person, to show what goals they should be pursuing.

After the Lord Jesus was resurrected, He appeared to the people He thought necessary, spoke with them, and made requirements of them, leaving behind His intentions for and expectations of people. That is to say, as God incarnate, His concern for mankind and requirements of people never changed; these remained the same when He was in the flesh and when He was in His spiritual body after being nailed to the cross and being resurrected. He was concerned about these disciples before He was up on the cross, and in His heart He was clear about the state of every single person and He understood every person's deficiencies and, of course, His understanding of every person after He had died, been resurrected, and become a spiritual body was the same as it had been when He was in the flesh. He knew that people were not entirely certain of His identity as Christ, but during His time in the flesh He did not make strict demands of people. However, after He had been resurrected, He appeared to them, and He made them absolutely certain that the Lord Jesus had come from God and that He was God incarnate, and He used the fact of His appearance and His resurrection as the greatest vision and motivation for mankind's lifelong pursuit. His resurrection from death not only strengthened all those who followed Him, but it also thoroughly implemented His work of the Age of Grace among mankind, and thus the gospel of the Lord Jesus' salvation in the Age of Grace gradually spread to every corner of humanity. Would you say that the Lord Jesus' appearance after His resurrection had any significance? If you were Thomas or Peter at that time, and you encountered this one thing in your life that was so

meaningful, what kind of impact would it have had on you? Would you have seen this as the best and the greatest vision of your life of believing in God? Would you have seen this as a force driving you as you followed God, strived to satisfy Him, and sought to love God in your whole life? Would you have expended a lifetime of effort to spread this greatest of visions? Would you have accepted spreading the Lord Jesus' salvation as a commission from God? Even though you have not experienced this, the two examples of Thomas and Peter are already enough for modern people to gain a clear understanding of God and His will. It could be said that after God had become flesh, after He personally experienced the life among mankind and personally experienced the human life, and after He saw the depravity of mankind and the situation of human life at that time, God in the flesh felt more deeply how helpless, lamentable, and pitiful mankind is. God gained more empathy for the human condition because of His humanity which He possessed while living in the flesh, because of His fleshly instincts. This led Him to feel greater concern for His followers. These are probably things that you cannot understand, but I can describe this worry and care felt by God in the flesh for every one of His followers using just two words: "intense concern." Even though this term comes from human language, and even though it is very human, it nonetheless truly expresses and describes God's feelings for His followers. As for God's intense concern for humans, over the course of your experiences you will gradually feel this and get a taste of it. However, this can only be achieved by gradually understanding God's disposition on the basis of pursuing a change in your own disposition. When the Lord Jesus made this appearance, it caused His intense concern for His followers in humanity to materialize and be passed over to His spiritual body, or you could say, to His divinity. His appearance allowed people to once more experience and feel God's concern and care while also powerfully proving that God is the One who launches an age, who unfurls an age, and who also ends an age. Through His appearance, He strengthened the faith of all people and proved to the world the fact that He is God Himself. This gave His followers eternal confirmation, and through His appearance He also launched a phase of His work in the new age.

13. Jesus Eats Bread and Explains the Scriptures After His Resurrection

Luk 24:30–32 And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?

14. The Disciples Give Jesus Broiled Fish to Eat

Luk 24:36–43 And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the middle of them, and said to them, Peace be to you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, Why are you troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your

hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said to them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them.

Next, we will take a look at the passages of scripture above. The first passage is a recounting of the Lord Jesus eating bread and explaining the scriptures after His resurrection, and the second passage is a recounting of the Lord Jesus eating a broiled fish. How do these two passages help you to know God's disposition? Can you imagine the kind of picture you get from these descriptions of the Lord Jesus eating bread and then a broiled fish? Can you imagine, if the Lord Jesus were standing in front of you eating bread, how you might feel? Or if He were eating at the same table with you, eating fish and bread with people, what kind of feeling you would have in that moment? If you would feel very close to the Lord, that He is very intimate with you, then this feeling is right. This is exactly the result that the Lord Jesus wanted to bring about by eating bread and fish in front of the gathered people after His resurrection. If the Lord Jesus had only spoken with people after His resurrection, if they could not feel His flesh and bones, but instead felt Him to be an unreachable Spirit, how would they have felt? Would they not have been disappointed? Feeling disappointed, would the people not have felt abandoned? Would they not have felt a distance between themselves and the Lord Jesus Christ? What kind of negative impact would this distance have created on people's relationship with God? People would certainly have felt afraid, that they dared not come close to Him, and thus they would have had an attitude of keeping Him at a respectful distance. From then on, they would have severed their intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and returned to a relationship between mankind and God up in heaven as it was before the Age of Grace. The spiritual body that people could not touch or feel would have brought about the eradication of their intimacy with God, and it would also have caused that intimate relationship, established during the Lord Jesus Christ's time in the flesh, with no distance between Him and humans, to cease to exist. The only things that were stirred in people by the spiritual body were feelings of fear, avoidance, and a wordless gaze. They would not have dared to get close or to engage in dialogue with Him, let alone follow, trust, or look up to Him. God did not wish to see this type of feeling that humans had for Him. He did not want to see people avoiding Him or removing themselves from Him; He only wanted people to understand Him, come close to Him, and to be His family. If your own family, your children, saw you but did not recognize you, and did not dare to come close to you but always avoided you, if you could not gain their understanding for everything you had done for them, how would that make you feel? Would it not be painful? Would you not be heartbroken? That is precisely what God feels when people avoid Him. So, after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus still appeared to

people in His form of flesh and blood, and still ate and drank with them. God sees people as family, and God also wants mankind to see Him as the One dearest to them; only in this way can God truly gain people, and only in this way can people truly love and worship God. Now can you understand My intention in extracting these two passages of scripture in which the Lord Jesus eats bread and explains the scriptures after His resurrection, and in which the disciples give Him a broiled fish to eat?

It can be said that earnest thought had been put into the series of things that the Lord Jesus said and did after His resurrection. These things were full of the kindness and affection that God held toward humanity, and full also of the cherishment and meticulous care He had for the intimate relationship He had established with mankind during His time in the flesh. Even more, they were full of the nostalgia and the longing He felt for His life of eating and living together with His followers during His time in the flesh. So, God did not want people to feel a distance between God and man, and nor did He want mankind to distance themselves from God. Even more, He did not want mankind to feel that the Lord Jesus after His resurrection was no longer the Lord who had been so intimate with people, that He was no longer together with mankind because He had returned to the spiritual world, returned to the Father whom people could never see or reach. He did not want people to feel that any difference in status had arisen between Him and mankind. When God sees people who want to follow Him but who keep Him at a respectful distance, His heart is in pain because that means that their hearts are very far from Him and that it will be very difficult for Him to gain their hearts. So if He had appeared to people in a spiritual body that they could not see or touch, this would have once again distanced man from God, and it would have led mankind to mistakenly see Christ after His resurrection as having become lofty, of a different kind than humans, and someone who could no longer share a table and eat with man because humans are sinful, filthy, and can never draw close to God. In order to dispel these misunderstandings of mankind, the Lord Jesus did a number of things that He used to do in the flesh, as recorded in the Bible: "He took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave to them." He also explained the scriptures to them, as He used to do in the past. All of these things that the Lord Jesus did made every person who saw Him feel that the Lord had not changed, that He was still the same Lord Jesus. Even though He had been nailed to the cross and had experienced death, He had been resurrected, and had not left mankind. He had returned to be among humans, and nothing about Him had changed. The Son of man standing in front of people was still the same Lord Jesus. His demeanor and His way of conversing with people felt so familiar. He was still so full of lovingkindness, grace, and tolerance—He was still the same Lord Jesus who loved others as He loved Himself, who could forgive mankind seventy times seven. As He always had before, He ate with people, discussed the scriptures with them, and even more importantly, just as before, He was made of flesh and blood and could be touched and seen. The Son of man as He was allowed people to feel intimacy, to feel at ease, and to feel the joy of regaining something that had been lost. With great ease, they bravely and confidently began to rely on and look up to this Son of man who could forgive mankind of their sins. They also began to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus without hesitation, to pray to obtain His grace, His blessing, and to obtain peace and joy from Him, to gain care and protection from Him, and they began to heal the sick and cast out demons in the name of the Lord Jesus.

During the time that the Lord Jesus worked in the flesh, most of His followers could not fully verify His identity and the things that He said. When He was approaching the cross, the attitude of His followers was one of observing. Then, from the time when He was nailed to the cross until He was put into the grave, people's attitude toward Him was disappointment. During this time, people had already begun to move in their hearts from doubting the things the Lord Jesus had said during His time in the flesh to denying them altogether. Then, when He walked out from the grave and appeared to people one by one, the majority of those who saw Him with their own eyes or heard the news of His resurrection gradually shifted their attitude from denial to skepticism. Only when the Lord Jesus had Thomas put his hand into His side, and when He broke bread and ate it in front of the crowd after His resurrection and then proceeded to eat a broiled fish in front of them, did they truly accept the fact that the Lord Jesus was Christ in the flesh. You could say that it was as if this spiritual body of flesh and blood standing before those people was awakening every one of them from a dream: The Son of man standing in front of them was the One who had existed since time immemorial. He had a form, and flesh and bones, and He had already lived and eaten alongside mankind for a long time.... At this time, the people felt that His existence was so real, and so wonderful. At the same time, they were also so joyful and happy and filled with emotion. His reappearance allowed people to truly see His humility, to feel His closeness and attachment to mankind, and to feel how much He thought about them. This brief reunion made the people who saw the Lord Jesus feel as if a lifetime had passed. Their lost, confused, afraid, anxious, yearning and numb hearts found comfort. They were no longer doubtful or disappointed, because they felt that now there was hope and something to rely on. The Son of man then standing before them would be their rear guard for all time; He would be their strong tower, their refuge for all eternity.

Although the Lord Jesus was resurrected, His heart and His work had not left mankind. By appearing to people, He told them that no matter what form He existed in, He would accompany people, walk with them, and be with them at all times and in all places. He told them that at all times and in all places He would provide for mankind and shepherd them, allow them to see and touch Him, and ensure they never again felt helpless. The Lord Jesus also wanted people to know that they do not live alone in this world. Mankind has God's care; God is with them. They can always lean on God, and He is family to every one of His followers. With God to lean on, mankind will no longer be lonely or helpless, and those who accept Him as their sin offering will no longer be

bound in sin. In human eyes, these portions of His work that the Lord Jesus carried out after His resurrection were very small things, but the way I see it, every single thing He did was so meaningful, so valuable, so important and heavily laden with significance.

Although the Lord Jesus' time of working in the flesh was full of hardships and suffering. He completely and perfectly accomplished His work of that time in the flesh to redeem mankind through His appearance in His spiritual body of flesh and blood. He began His ministry by becoming flesh, and He concluded His ministry by appearing to mankind in His fleshly form. He heralded the Age of Grace, beginning the new age through His identity as Christ. Through His identity as Christ, He carried out work in the Age of Grace and He strengthened and led all of His followers in the Age of Grace. It can be said of God's work that He truly finishes what He starts. There are steps and a plan, and the work is full of His wisdom, His omnipotence, His marvelous deeds, and His love and mercy. Of course, the main thread running through all of God's work is His care for mankind; it is permeated with His feelings of concern that He can never put aside. In these verses of the Bible, in every single thing that the Lord Jesus did after His resurrection, God's unchanging hopes and concern for mankind were revealed, as were His meticulous care and cherishing of mankind. None of this has ever changed, all the way to the present day—can you see it? When you see this, do your hearts not unconsciously draw closer to God? If you lived in that age and the Lord Jesus appeared to you after His resurrection in a tangible form for you to see, and if He sat in front of you, ate bread and fish and explained the scriptures to you and spoke with you, then how would you feel? Would you feel happy? Or would you feel guilty? The previous misunderstandings and avoidance of God, the conflicts with and doubts of God—would they not all just disappear? Would the relationship between God and man not become more normal and proper?

By interpreting these limited chapters of the Bible, do you find any flaws in God's disposition? Do you find any adulteration of God's love? Do you see any deceit or evil in God's omnipotence or wisdom? Certainly not! Now can you say with certainty that God is holy? Can you say with certainty that each of God's emotions is a revelation of His essence and disposition? I hope that after you have read these words, the understanding you gain from them will help you and bring you benefits in your pursuit of a change in disposition and a fear of God, and that they will bear fruit in you, fruit that grows by the day, so that in the process of this pursuit you will be brought closer and closer to God, closer and closer to the standard that God requires. You will no longer be bored of the pursuit of the truth and will no longer feel that the pursuit of the truth and of a change in disposition is a troublesome or a superfluous thing. Rather, motivated by the expression of God's true disposition and the holy essence of God, you will long for the light, long for justice, aspire to pursue the truth, to pursue the satisfaction of God's will, and you will become a person gained by God, become a real person.

Today we have talked about certain things that God did in the Age of Grace when

He was made incarnate for the first time. From these things, we have seen the disposition that He expressed and revealed in the flesh, as well as every aspect of what He has and is. All these aspects of what He has and is seem very humanized, but the reality is that the essence of all that He revealed and expressed is inseparable from His own disposition. Every method and every aspect of God incarnate expressing His disposition in humanity is inextricably linked with His own essence. So, it is very important that God came to mankind using the way of incarnation. Also important is the work that He did in the flesh, but even more important to every person living in the flesh, to every person living in corruption, are the disposition that He revealed and the will that He expressed. Is this something that you are able to understand? After understanding God's disposition and what He has and is, have you made any conclusions as to how you should treat God? Finally, in response to this question, I would like to give you three pieces of counsel: First, do not test God. No matter how much you understand about God, no matter how much you know about His disposition, absolutely do not test Him. Second, do not contend for status with God. No matter what type of status God gives you or what kind of work He entrusts you with, no matter what kind of duty He raises you up to perform, and no matter how much you have expended yourself and sacrificed for God, absolutely do not compete for status with Him. Third, do not compete with God. No matter whether you understand or if you can submit to what God does with you, what He arranges for you, and the things He brings to you, absolutely do not compete with God. If you can abide by these three pieces of counsel, then you will be quite safe, and you will not be prone to angering God. This is where we will end today's fellowship.

November 23, 2013

God Himself, the Unique I God's Authority (I)

My last several fellowships were about God's work, God's disposition, and God Himself. After hearing these fellowships, do you feel that you have gained an understanding and knowledge of God's disposition? What degree of understanding and knowledge have you gained? Can you put a number to it? Did these fellowships give you a deeper understanding of God? Could it be said that this understanding is a true knowledge of God? Could it be said that this knowledge and understanding of God is a knowledge of the entire essence of God, and all that He has and is? No, obviously not! That is because these fellowships only provided an understanding of part of God's disposition and what He has and is—not all of it in its entirety. These fellowships enabled you to understand part of the work done by God in the past; through these fellowships, you beheld the disposition of God and what He has and is, as well as the approach and thinking behind everything that He has done. But this is only a literal, spoken understanding of God, and, in your hearts, you remain uncertain about how much of it is real. What mainly determines whether there is any reality to people's understanding of such things? It is determined by how much of God's words and disposition they have truly experienced during their actual experiences, and how much they have been able to see and know during these actual experiences. Has anyone said words such as these: "The last several fellowships allowed us to understand the things done by God, the thoughts of God, and, moreover, God's attitude toward mankind and the basis of His actions, as well as the principles of His actions; and so we have come to understand the disposition of God, and have known the entirety of God"? Is it right to say this? Clearly, it is not. Why do I say that it is not right to say this? God's disposition and what He has and is are expressed in the things that He has done and the words He has spoken. Through the work that God has done and the words that He has spoken, man is able to behold what God has and is, but this is only to say that the work and words enable man to understand but a part of God's disposition, and a part of what He has and is. If man wishes to gain a greater and more profound understanding of God, then man must experience more of God's words and work. Although man only gains a partial understanding of God when experiencing part of God's words or work, does this partial understanding represent God's true disposition? Does it represent the essence of God? Of course it represents the true disposition of God, and the essence of God; of that there is no doubt. Regardless of the time or place, or in what manner God does His work, or in what form He appears to man, or in what way He expresses His will, all that He reveals and expresses represents God Himself, God's essence, and what He has and is. God carries out His work with what He has and is, and in His true identity; this is absolutely true. Yet, today, people only have a partial understanding of God through His words, and through what they hear when they listen to the preaching, and so to a certain extent, this understanding can only be said to be a theoretical knowledge. In view of your actual states, you can verify the understanding or knowledge of God that you have heard, seen, or known and understood in your heart today only if each of you goes through this in your actual experiences, and comes to know it bit by bit. If I did not fellowship these words with you, would you be able to achieve true knowledge of God solely through your experiences? To do so, I am afraid, would be very difficult. That is because people must first have the words of God in order to know how to experience. However many of God's words people eat, this is the same number that they can actually experience. God's words lead the path ahead, and guide man in his experience. In short, for those who have some true experience, these last several fellowships will help them achieve a deeper understanding of the truth, and a more realistic knowledge of God. But for those who do not have any true experience, or who have only just begun their experience, or have only just begun to touch upon the reality, this is a great test.

The main content of the last several fellowships concerned "God's disposition, God's work, and God Himself." What did you see in the key and central parts of everything that I spoke of? Through these fellowships, are you able to recognize that He who did the work, He who revealed these dispositions, is the unique God Himself who holds sovereignty over all things? If your answer is yes, then what leads you to such a conclusion? In reaching this conclusion, how many aspects did you consider? Can anyone tell Me? I know that the last few fellowships affected you deeply, and provided a new start in your hearts for your knowledge of God, which is excellent. But although, compared to before, you have made a great leap in your understanding of God, your definition of God's identity has yet to progress beyond the names of Jehovah God of the Age of Law, the Lord Jesus of the Age of Grace, and Almighty God of the Age of Kingdom. This is to say that, although these fellowships about "God's disposition, God's work, and God Himself" gave you some understanding of the words once spoken by God, and the work once done by God, and the being and possessions once revealed by God, you are incapable of providing a true definition and accurate orientation of the word "God." Neither do you have a true and accurate orientation and knowledge of the status and identity of God Himself, which is to say, of the status of God among all things and throughout the entire universe. That is because, in the previous fellowships about God Himself and God's disposition, all the content was based on God's previous expressions and revelations as recorded in the Bible. Yet it is difficult for man to discover the being and possessions that are revealed and expressed by God during, or outside of, His management and salvation of mankind. So, even if you understand God's being and possessions that were revealed in the work He has done in the past, your definition of God's identity and status is still a long way from "the unique God, the One who holds sovereignty over all things," and it is different from that of "the Creator." The last several fellowships made everyone feel the same way: How could man know the thoughts of God? If someone really were to know, then that person would most certainly be God, for

only God Himself knows His own thoughts, and only God Himself knows the basis and approach underlying everything that He does. It seems rational and logical for you to recognize God's identity in such a way, but who can tell from the disposition and work of God that this really is the work of God Himself, and not the work of man, work which cannot be done on God's behalf by man? Who can see that this work falls under the sovereignty of the One who has the essence and power of God? This is to say, through what characteristics or essence do you recognize that He is God Himself, who has the identity of God, and is the One who holds sovereignty over all things? Have you ever thought about that? If you have not, then this proves one fact: The last several fellowships have only given you some understanding of the piece of history in which God did His work, and of God's approach, manifestation, and revelations during that work. Although such understanding makes each of you recognize beyond doubt that the One who carried out these two stages of work is the God Himself whom you believe in and follow, the One whom you must always follow, you are still incapable of recognizing that He is the God who has existed since the creation of the world and who shall exist for eternity, nor are you able to recognize that He is the One who leads and holds sovereignty over all mankind. You have surely never thought about this problem. Be it Jehovah or the Lord Jesus, through which aspects of the essence and manifestation are you able to recognize that not only is He the God whom you must follow, but also the One who commands mankind and holds sovereignty over the fate of mankind, who is, moreover, the unique God Himself who holds sovereignty over the heavens and earth and all things? Through which channels do you recognize that the One whom you believe in and follow is God Himself who holds sovereignty over all things? Through which channels do you connect the God you believe in to the God who holds sovereignty over the fate of mankind? What allows you to recognize that the God you believe in is the unique God Himself, who is in heaven and on earth, and among all things? This is the problem that I shall solve in the next section.

The problems that you have never thought about or cannot think about could well be those which are most crucial to knowing God, and in which may be sought truths unfathomable to man. When these problems come upon you, such that you are required to face them and make a choice, if you are unable to fully resolve them because of your foolishness and ignorance, or because your experiences are too superficial and you lack a true knowledge of God, then they shall become the greatest obstacle and the greatest hindrance on the path of your belief in God. And so I feel it is highly necessary to fellowship with you regarding this subject. Do you know what your problem is now? Are you clear about the problems I speak of? Are these the problems that you will face? Are they the problems that you do not understand? Are they the problems that have never occurred to you? Are these problems important to you? Are they really problems? This matter is a source of great confusion to you, which shows that you do not take Him seriously.

Some people say, "I know He is God, and so I follow Him, because His words are the expression of God. That is enough. What more proof is needed? Surely we don't need to raise doubts about God? Surely we aren't supposed to test God? Surely we don't need to question God's essence and the identity of God Himself?" Regardless of whether you think in this way, I do not put forward such questions in order to make you confused about God, or to make you test Him, much less to give you doubts about God's identity and essence. Rather, I do so to encourage in you a greater understanding of God's essence, and a greater certainty and faith about God's status, so that God may become the only One in the hearts of all those who follow God, and so that the original status of God—as the Creator, the Ruler of all things, the unique God Himself—may be restored in the heart of every creature. This is also the theme about which I am going to fellowship.

Now, let us begin to read the following scriptures from the Bible.

1. God Uses Words to Create All Things

Gen 1:3–5 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Gen 1:6–7 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

Gen 1:9–11 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth: and it was so.

Gen 1:14–15 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light on the earth: and it was so.

Gen 1:20–21 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Gen 1:24–25 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creeps on the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

On the First Day, the Day and Night of Mankind Are Born and Stand Fast Thanks to the Authority of God

Let us look at the first passage: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was

light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen 1:3–5). This passage describes God's first act at the beginning of creation, and the first day that God passed in which there was an evening and a morning. But it was an extraordinary day: God began to prepare the light for all things, and, furthermore, divided the light from the darkness. On this day, God began to speak, and His words and authority existed side-by-side. His authority began to show forth among all things, and His power spread among all things as a result of His words. From this day onward, all things were formed and stood fast because of the words of God, the authority of God, and the power of God, and they began to function thanks to the words of God, the authority of God, and the power of God. When God said the words "Let there be light," so there was light. God did not embark upon any program of works; the light had appeared as a result of His words. This was the light that God called day, and which man still depends on for his existence today. By God's command, its essence and value have never changed, and it has never disappeared. Its existence shows forth the authority and power of God, and proclaims the existence of the Creator. It confirms, over and over, the identity and status of the Creator. It is not intangible, or illusory, but is a real light that can be seen by man. From that time onward, in this empty world in which "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep," there was produced the first material thing. This thing came from the words of the mouth of God, and appeared in the first act of the creation of all things because of the authority and utterances of God. Soon after, God ordered the light and the darkness to separate.... Everything changed and was completed because of the words of God.... God called this light "Day," and the darkness He called "Night." At that time, the first evening and the first morning were produced in the world God intended to create, and God said that this was the first day. This day was the first day of the Creator's creation of all things, and was the beginning of the creation of all things, and was the first time that the authority and power of the Creator had been shown forth in this world that He had created.

Through these words, man is able to behold the authority of God and of God's words, as well as God's power. Because only God is possessed of such power, so only God has such authority; because God is possessed of such authority, so only God has such power. Could any man or object possess such authority and power as this? Is there an answer in your hearts? Apart from God, does any created or non-created being possess such authority? Have you ever seen an example of such a thing in any book or publication? Is there any record that someone created the heavens and earth and all things? It does not appear in any other books or records; these are, of course, the only authoritative and powerful words about God's magnificent creation of the world, which are recorded in the Bible; these words speak for the unique authority and identity of God. Can such authority and power be said to symbolize the unique identity of God? Can they

be said to be possessed by God, and God alone? Without a doubt, only God Himself possesses such authority and power! This authority and power cannot be possessed or replaced by any created or non-created being! Is this one of the characteristics of the unique God Himself? Have you witnessed it? These words quickly and clearly allow people to understand the fact that God is possessed of unique authority, and unique power, of supreme identity and status. From the fellowship above, can you say that the God you believe in is the unique God Himself?

On the Second Day, God's Authority Arranges the Waters, and Makes the Firmament, and a Space for the Most Basic Human Survival Appears

Let us read the second passage of the Bible: "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so" (Gen 1:6–7). What changes occurred after God said "Let there be a firmament in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters"? In the Scriptures it says: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." What was the result after God had spoken and done this? The answer lies in the last part of the passage: "and it was so."

These two short sentences record a magnificent event, and describe a wonderful scene—the tremendous undertaking in which God governed the waters, and created a space in which man could exist ...

In this picture, the waters and the firmament appear before the eyes of God in an instant, and they are divided by the authority of God's words, and separated into an "above" and a "below" in the manner appointed by God. This is to say, the firmament created by God not only covered the waters below, but also held up the waters above.... In this, man cannot help but stare, dumbfounded, and gasp in admiration at the might of His authority and at the splendor of the scene in which the Creator moved and commanded the waters, and created the firmament. Through the words of God, and the power of God, and the authority of God, God achieved another great feat. Is this not the might of the Creator's authority? Let us use the scriptures to explain the deeds of God: God spoke His words, and because of these words of God there was a firmament in the middle of the waters. At the same time, a tremendous change occurred in this space because of these words of God, and it was not change in an ordinary sense, but a kind of substitution in which nothing became something. It was born of the thoughts of the Creator, and became something from nothing because of the words spoken by the Creator, and, furthermore, from this point onward it would exist and stand fast for the sake of the Creator, and would shift, change, and renew in accordance with the thoughts of the Creator. This passage describes the second act of the Creator in His creation of the whole world. It was another expression of the authority and power of the Creator,

another pioneering undertaking by the Creator. This day was the second day that the Creator had passed since the foundation of the world, and it was another wonderful day for Him: He walked amongst the light, He brought the firmament, He arranged and governed the waters, and His deeds, His authority, and His power were put to work in the new day ...

Was there firmament in the middle of the waters before God spoke His words? Of course not! And what about after God said "Let there be a firmament in the middle of the waters"? The things intended by God appeared; there was firmament in the middle of the waters, and the waters separated because God said "Let it divide the waters from the waters." In this way, following the words of God, two new objects, two newly-born things appeared among all things as a result of the authority and power of God. How do you feel about the appearance of these two new things? Do you feel the greatness of the Creator's power? Do you feel the unique and extraordinary force of the Creator? The greatness of such force and power is due to the authority of God, and this authority is a representation of God Himself, and a unique characteristic of God Himself.

Did this passage once more give you a profound sense of the uniqueness of God? In fact, this is far from enough; the authority and power of the Creator extend far beyond this. His uniqueness is not merely because He is possessed of an essence unlike that of any creature, but also because His authority and power are extraordinary, limitless, superlative to all, and stand above all, and, moreover, because His authority and what He has and is can create life, produce miracles, and create each and every spectacular and extraordinary minute and second. At the same time, He is able to govern the life that He creates and hold sovereignty over the miracles and each and every minute and second that He creates.

On the Third Day, the Words of God Give Birth to the Earth and the Seas, and the Authority of God Causes the World to Brim With Life

Next, let us read the first sentence of Genesis 1:9–11: "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear." What changes occurred after God simply said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear"? And what was there in this space apart from the light and the firmament? In the Scriptures, it is written: "And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good." This is to say, there was now land and seas in this space, and the land and seas were separated. The appearance of these new things followed the commandment from the mouth of God, "and it was so." Does the Scripture describe God rushing about while He was doing this? Does it describe Him engaging in physical labor? So, how did God do this? How did God cause these new things to be produced? Self-evidently, God used words to achieve all of this, to create the entirety of this.

In the three passages above, we have learned of the occurrence of three great

events. These three great events transpired and were brought into being through the words of God, and it is because of His words that, one after the other, these events appeared before the eyes of God. Thus it can be seen that the words: "God speaks, and it will be accomplished; He commands, and it will stand fast" are not hollow. This essence of God is confirmed the instant that His thoughts are conceived, and when God opens His mouth to speak, His essence is fully reflected.

Let us continue to the final sentence of this passage: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth: and it was so." While God was speaking, all these things came into being following the thoughts of God, and in an instant, an assortment of delicate little life forms were unsteadily poking their heads up through the soil, and before they had even shaken the bits of dirt from their bodies they were eagerly waving to each other in greeting, nodding and smiling to the world. They thanked the Creator for the life that He bestowed upon them, and announced to the world that they were a part of all things, and that they would each devote their lives to showing forth the authority of the Creator. As the words of God were spoken, the land became lush and green, all sorts of herbs that could be enjoyed by man sprang forth and broke through the ground, and the mountains and plains became thickly populated by trees and forests.... This barren world, in which there had not been any trace of life, was rapidly covered by a profusion of grass, herbs and trees and overflowing with greenery.... The fragrance of grass and the aroma of the soil spread through the air, and an array of plants began to breathe in tandem with the circulation of the air, and began the process of growing. At the same time, thanks to the words of God and following the thoughts of God, all the plants began the perpetual life cycles in which they grow, blossom, bear fruit, and multiply. They began to strictly adhere to their respective life courses and began to perform their respective roles among all things.... They were all born, and lived, because of the words of the Creator. They would receive the unceasing provision and nourishment of the Creator, and would always tenaciously survive in every corner of the land in order to show forth the authority and power of the Creator, and they would always show forth the life force bestowed upon them by the Creator ...

The life of the Creator is extraordinary, His thoughts are extraordinary, and His authority is extraordinary, and so, when His words were uttered, the final result was "and it was so." Clearly, God does not need to work with His hands when He acts; He merely uses His thoughts to command and His words to order, and in this way things are achieved. On this day, God gathered the waters together to one place, and let the dry land appear, after which God caused grass to sprout forth from the land, and there grew the herbs yielding seeds, and trees bearing fruit, and God classed them each according to kind, and caused each to contain its own seed. All this was realized according to the thoughts of God and the commands of the words of God, and each appeared, one after the other, in this new world.

When He had yet to commence His work, God already had a picture of what He intended to achieve in His mind, and when God set about achieving these things, which was also when God opened His mouth to speak of the content of this picture, changes in all things began to occur thanks to the authority and power of God. Irrespective of how God did it, or how He exerted His authority, all was achieved step by step according to God's plan and because of the words of God, and, step by step, changes occurred between heaven and earth thanks to the words and authority of God. All of these changes and occurrences showed forth the Creator's authority, and the extraordinariness and greatness of the power of the Creator's life. His thoughts are not simple ideas, or an empty picture, but an authority possessed of vitality and extraordinary energy, and they are the power to cause all things to change, revive, renew, and perish. Because of this, all things function because of His thoughts, and, at the same time, are achieved because of the words from His mouth ...

Before all things appeared, in the thoughts of God a complete plan had long ago been formed, and a new world had long ago been achieved. Although on the third day there appeared all sorts of plants on the land, God had no reason to halt the steps of His creation of this world; He intended to continue to speak His words, to continue to achieve the creation of every new thing. He would speak, would issue His commands, and would exert His authority and show forth His power, and He prepared everything that He had planned to prepare for all the things and the mankind that He intended to create ...

On the Fourth Day, the Seasons, Days, and Years of Mankind Come Into Being as God Exerts His Authority Once Again

The Creator used His words to accomplish His plan, and in this way He passed the first three days of His plan. During these three days, God was not seen to be busy, or to exhaust Himself; on the contrary, He passed a wonderful first three days of His plan, and achieved the great undertaking of the world's radical transformation. A brand-new world appeared before His eyes, and, piece by piece, the beautiful picture that had been sealed within His thoughts was finally revealed in the words of God. The appearance of each new thing was like the birth of a newborn baby, and the Creator took pleasure in the picture that had once been in His thoughts, but which had now been brought to life. At this time, His heart gained a sliver of satisfaction, but His plan had only just begun. In the blink of an eye, a new day had arrived—and what was the next page in the Creator's plan? What did He say? How did He exert His authority? Meanwhile, what new things came into this new world? Following the guidance of the Creator, our gaze falls on the fourth day of God's creation of all things, a day which was yet another new beginning. Of course, for the Creator, it was undoubtedly another wonderful day, and it was another day of the utmost importance for the mankind of today. It was, of course, a day of inestimable value. How was it wonderful, how was it so important, and how was it of inestimable value? Let us first listen to the words spoken by the Creator ...

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light on the earth" (Gen 1:14–15). This was another exertion of God's authority that was shown forth by creatures following His creation of dry land and the plants upon it. For God, such an act was just as easy as what He had already done, because God has such power; God is as good as His word, and His word will be accomplished. God ordered lights to appear in the heaven, and these lights not only shone in the sky and upon the earth, but also served as signs for day and night, for seasons, days, and years. In this way, as God spoke His words, every act that God wished to achieve was fulfilled according to God's meaning and in the manner appointed by God.

The lights in the heaven are matter in the sky that can radiate light; they can illuminate the sky and the land and the seas. They revolve according to the rhythm and frequency commanded by God, and light up different time periods upon land, and in this way the revolving cycles of the lights cause day and night to be produced in the east and west of the land, and they are not only signs for night and day, but through these different cycles they also mark the feasts and various special days of mankind. They are the perfect complement and accompaniment to the four seasons—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—issued forth by God, together with which the lights harmoniously serve as regular and accurate marks for the lunar terms, days, and years of mankind. Although it was only after the advent of farming that mankind began to understand and encounter the division of lunar terms, days, and years caused by the lights created by God, in fact the lunar terms, days, and years that man understands today began to be produced long ago on the fourth day of God's creation of all things, and so too did the interchanging cycles of spring, summer, autumn, and winter experienced by man begin long ago on the fourth day of God's creation of all things. The lights created by God enabled man to regularly, precisely, and clearly differentiate between night and day, and count the days, and clearly keep track of the lunar terms and years. (The day of the full moon was the completion of one month, and from this man knew that the illumination of lights begins a new cycle; the day of the half moon was the completion of one half of a month, which told man that a new lunar term was beginning, from which it could be inferred how many days and nights were in a lunar term, how many lunar terms were in a season, and how many seasons were in a year, and all this was revealed with great regularity.) So, man could easily keep track of the lunar terms, days, and years marked by the revolutions of the lights. From this point onward, mankind and all things unconsciously lived amongst the orderly interchange of night and day and alternations of the seasons produced by the revolutions of the lights. This was the significance of the Creator's creation of the lights on the fourth day. Similarly, the aims and significance of this action of the Creator were still inseparable from His authority and power. And so, the lights made by God and the value that they would soon bring to man were another masterstroke in the exertion of the Creator's authority.

In this new world, in which mankind had yet to make an appearance, the Creator had prepared evening and morning, the firmament, land and seas, grass, herbs and various types of trees, and the lights, seasons, days, and years for the new life that He would soon create. The authority and power of the Creator were expressed in each new thing that He created, and His words and accomplishments occurred simultaneously, without the slightest discrepancy, and without the slightest interval. The appearance and birth of all these new things were proof of the authority and power of the Creator: He is as good as His word, and His word will be accomplished, and that which He accomplishes lasts forever. This fact has never changed: so it was in the past, so it is today, and so it will be for all eternity. When you look once more at those words of scripture, do they feel fresh to you? Have you seen new content, and made new discoveries? That is because the deeds of the Creator have stirred your hearts, and guided the direction of your knowledge of His authority and power, and opened the door to your understanding of the Creator, and His deeds and authority have bestowed life upon these words. So, in these words man has seen a real, vivid expression of the Creator's authority, truly witnessed the supremacy of the Creator, and beheld the extraordinariness of the authority and power of the Creator.

The Creator's authority and power produce miracle after miracle; He attracts man's attention, and man cannot help but stare transfixed at the astounding deeds born from the exertion of His authority. His phenomenal power brings delight after delight, and man is left dazzled and overjoyed, gasping in admiration, awestruck and cheering; furthermore, man is visibly moved and there is produced in him respect, reverence, and attachment. The authority and deeds of the Creator have a great impact and cleansing effect upon the spirit of man, and, moreover, they sate the spirit of man. Every one of His thoughts, every one of His utterances, and every revelation of His authority is a masterpiece among all things, and is a great undertaking most worthy of the created mankind's deep understanding and knowledge. When we count every creature born from the words of the Creator, our spirits are drawn to the wonder of God's power, and we find ourselves following the footprints of the Creator to the next day: the fifth day of God's creation of all things.

Let us continue reading the Scripture passage by passage, as we look at more of the Creator's deeds.

On the Fifth Day, Life of Varied and Diverse Forms Exhibits the Authority of the Creator in Different Ways

Scripture says, "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the

waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:20–21). Scripture clearly tells us that, on this day, God made the creatures in the waters and the birds of the air, which is to say that He created the various fish and birds, and classed them each according to kind. In this way, the earth, the skies, and the waters were enriched by God's creation ...

As God's words were spoken, fresh new life, each with a different form, instantly came alive amidst the words of the Creator. They came into the world jostling for position, jumping, frolicking for joy.... Fish of all shapes and sizes swam through the water; shellfish of all kinds grew out of the sands; scaled, shelled, and spineless creatures hurriedly grew forth in different forms, whether great or small, long or short. So too did various kinds of seaweed begin to briskly grow, swaying to the motion of the various aquatic life, undulating, urging the stagnant waters, as if to say to them: "Shake a leg! Bring your friends! For you'll never be alone again!" From the moment that the various living creatures created by God appeared in the water, each fresh new life brought vitality to waters that had been quiescent for so long, and ushered in a new era.... From that point onward, they nestled against each other, and kept each other company, and kept no distance between themselves. The water existed for the creatures within it, nourishing each life that resided within its embrace, and every life existed for the sake of the water because of its nourishment. Each conferred life upon the other, and at the same time, each, in the same way, bore testament to the miraculousness and greatness of the Creator's creation, and to the unsurpassable power of the Creator's authority ...

As the sea was no longer silent, so too did life begin to fill the skies. One by one, birds, big and small, flew up into the sky from the ground. Unlike the creatures of the sea, they had wings and feathers covering their slim and graceful figures. They fluttered their wings, proudly and haughtily displaying their gorgeous coat of feathers and their special functions and skills bestowed upon them by the Creator. They soared freely, and skillfully shuttled between heaven and earth, across grasslands and forests.... They were the darlings of the air, they were the darlings of all things. They would soon become the tie between heaven and earth, and would pass on the messages to all things.... They sang, they joyfully swooped about, they brought cheers, laughter, and vibrancy to this once empty world.... They used their clear, melodious singing, used the words within their hearts to praise the Creator for the life bestowed upon them. They cheerfully danced to display the perfection and miraculousness of the Creator's creation, and would devote their whole lives to bearing testament to the authority of the Creator through the special life that He had bestowed upon them ...

Regardless of whether they were in the water, or of the skies, by the command of the Creator, this plethora of living things existed in the different configurations of life, and by the command of the Creator, they gathered together according to their respective species—and this law, this rule, was unalterable by any creatures. Never did they dare to go beyond the bounds set forth for them by the Creator, nor were they able to. As

ordained by the Creator, they lived and multiplied, and strictly adhered to the life course and laws set for them by the Creator, and consciously abided by His unspoken commands and the heavenly edicts and precepts that He gave them, all the way until today. They conversed with the Creator in their own special way, and came to appreciate the meaning of the Creator, and obeyed His commands. None ever transgressed the authority of the Creator, and His sovereignty and command over them was exerted within His thoughts; no words were issued forth, but the authority that was unique to the Creator controlled all the things in silence that possessed no language function, and which differed from mankind. The exertion of His authority in this special way compelled man to gain a new knowledge, and make a new interpretation, of the Creator's unique authority. Here, I must tell you that on this new day, the exertion of the Creator's authority demonstrated once more the uniqueness of the Creator.

Next, let us take a look at the last sentence of this passage of scripture: "God saw that it was good." What do you think this means? God's emotions are contained within these words. God watched all things that He had created come into being and stand fast because of His words, and gradually begin to change. At this time, was God satisfied with the various things that He had made with His words, and the various acts that He had achieved? The answer is that "God saw that it was good." What do you see here? What does it represent that "God saw that it was good"? What does it symbolize? It means that God had the power and wisdom to accomplish that which He had planned and prescribed, to accomplish the goals that He had set out to accomplish. When God had completed each task, did He feel regret? The answer is still that "God saw that it was good." In other words, not only did He feel no regret, but was instead satisfied. What does it mean that He felt no regret? It means that God's plan is perfect, that His power and wisdom are perfect, and that it is only by His authority that such perfection can be accomplished. When man performs a task, can he, like God, see that it is good? Can everything that man does accomplish perfection? Can man complete something once and for all eternity? Just as man says, "nothing's perfect, only better," nothing that man does can attain perfection. When God saw that all that He had done and achieved was good, everything made by God was set by His words, which is to say that, when "God saw that it was good," all that He had made assumed a permanent form, was classed according to type, and was given a fixed position, purpose, and function, once and for all eternity. Moreover, their role among all things, and the journey that they must take during God's management of all things, had already been ordained by God, and were immutable. This was the heavenly law given by the Creator to all things.

"God saw that it was good," these simple, underappreciated words, so often ignored, are the words of the heavenly law and heavenly edict given to all creatures by God. They are another embodiment of the Creator's authority, one that is more practical, and more profound. Through His words, the Creator was not only able to gain all that He set out to gain, and achieve all that He set out to achieve, but could also control in His hands all

that He had created, and rule all things that He had made under His authority, and, furthermore, all was systematic and regular. All things also proliferated, existed, and perished by His word and, moreover, by His authority they existed amidst the law that He had set forth, and none was exempt! This law began at the very instant that "God saw that it was good," and it shall exist, continue, and function for the sake of God's plan of management right up until the day that it is repealed by the Creator! The unique authority of the Creator was manifested not only in His ability to create all things and command all things to come into being, but also in His ability to govern and hold sovereignty over all things, and bestow life and vitality upon all things, and, moreover, in His ability to cause, once and for all eternity, all things that He would create in His plan to appear and exist in the world made by Him in a perfect shape, and a perfect life structure, and a perfect role. So too was it manifested in the way that the thoughts of the Creator were not subject to any constraints, were not limited by time, space, or geography. Like His authority, the unique identity of the Creator shall remain unchanged from everlasting to everlasting. His authority shall always be a representation and symbol of His unique identity, and His authority shall forever exist side-by-side with His identity!

On the Sixth Day, the Creator Speaks, and Each Kind of Living Creature in His Mind Makes Its Appearance, One After Another

Imperceptibly, the Creator's work of making all things had continued for five days, immediately following which the Creator welcomed the sixth day of His creation of all things. This day was another new beginning, and another extraordinary day. What, then, was the Creator's plan on the eve of this new day? What new creatures would He produce, would He create? Listen, that is the voice of the Creator ...

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creeps on the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:24–25). What living creatures are included? The Scriptures say: cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind. Which is to say that, on this day there were not only all sorts of living creatures upon the earth, but they were all classified according to kind, and, likewise, "God saw that it was good."

As during the previous five days, the Creator spoke with the same tone and ordered the birth of the living creatures that He desired, and that they appear upon the earth, each according to their kind. When the Creator exerts His authority, none of His words are spoken in vain, and so, on the sixth day, each living creature that He had intended to create appeared at the appointed time. As the Creator said "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind," the earth was at once filled with life, and upon the land there suddenly emerged the breath of all sorts of living creatures.... In the grassy green

wilderness, stout cows, swishing their tails to and fro, appeared one after the other, bleating sheep gathered themselves into herds, and neighing horses began to gallop.... In an instant, the vast expanses of silent grassland exploded with life.... The appearance of these various livestock was a beautiful sight upon the tranquil grassland, and brought boundless vitality.... They would be the companions of the grasslands, and the masters of the grasslands, each mutually dependent on the other; so too would they become the guardians and keepers of these lands, which would be their permanent habitat, and which would provide them with all they needed, a source of eternal nourishment for their existence ...

On the same day that these various livestock came into being, by the Creator's word, a plethora of insects also appeared, one after the other. Even though they were the smallest of the living things among all creatures, their life force was still the miraculous creation of the Creator, and they did not arrive too late.... Some fluttered their little wings, while others slowly crawled; some hopped and bounced, others staggered; some barreled forward, while others quickly retreated; some moved sideways, others hopped high and low.... All were busy trying to find homes for themselves: Some pushed their way into the grass, some set about burrowing holes in the ground, some flew up into the trees, hidden in the forests.... Though small in size, they were unwilling to endure the torment of an empty stomach, and after finding their own homes, they rushed to seek food to feed themselves. Some climbed upon the grass to eat its tender blades, some grabbed mouthfuls of dirt and swallowed it down into their stomachs, eating with much gusto and pleasure (for them, even dirt is a tasty treat); some were hidden in the forests, but they did not stop to rest, for the sap within the glossy dark green leaves provided a succulent meal.... After they were sated, still the insects did not cease their activity; though small in stature, they were possessed of tremendous energy and limitless exuberance, and so of all creatures, they are the most active and the most industrious. They were never lazy, and never indulged in rest. Once their appetites were sated, still they toiled about their labors for the sake of their future, busying themselves and rushing about for their tomorrows, for their survival.... They softly hummed ballads of various melodies and rhythms to encourage and urge themselves on. They also added joy to the grass, trees, and every inch of soil, making each day, and each year, unique.... With their own languages and with their own ways, they passed on information to all the living things upon the land. Using their own special life course, they marked all things, upon which they left traces.... They were on intimate terms with the soil, the grass, and the forests, and they brought vigor and vitality to the soil, the grass, and the forests. They brought the exhortations and greetings of the Creator to all living things ...

The Creator's gaze swept across all things that He had created, and at this moment His eyes paused upon the forests and mountains, His mind turning. As His words were uttered forth, in the dense forests, and upon the mountains, there appeared a type of creatures unlike any that had come before: They were the wild animals spoken by the

mouth of God. Long overdue, they shook their heads and swished their tails, each with their own unique face. Some had furry coats, some were armored, some bared fangs, some wore grins, some were long-necked, some short-tailed, some wild-eyed, some possessed of a timid gaze, some bent over to eat grass, some with blood about their mouths, some bouncing along on two legs, some pacing about on four hooves, some looking into the distance atop trees, some lying in wait in the forests, some searching for caves to rest, some running and frolicking upon the plains, some prowling through the forests...; some were roaring, some howling, some barking, some crying...; some were soprano, some were baritone, some were full-throated, some were clear and melodious...; some were grim, some were pretty, some were disgusting, some were adorable, some were frightening, some were charmingly naive.... One by one, they each came forth. See how high and mighty they are, free-spirited, idly indifferent to each other, not bothering to spare a glance for one another.... Each bearing the particular life bestowed upon them by the Creator, and their own wildness, and brutishness, they appeared in the forests and upon the mountains. Contemptuous of all, so completely imperious—they were true masters of the mountains and forests, after all. From the moment that their appearance was ordained by the Creator, they "laid claim" to the forests and to the mountains, for the Creator had already sealed their boundaries and determined the scope of their existence. Only they were true lords of the mountains and forests, and that is why they were so wild, so contemptuous. They were called "wild animals" purely because, of all creatures, they were the ones which were truly wild, brutish, and untamable. They could not be tamed, so they could not be reared, and could not live in harmony with mankind or labor on behalf of mankind. It was because they could not be reared, could not work for mankind, that they had to live at a distance from mankind, and could not be approached by man. In turn, it was because they lived at a distance from mankind, and could not be approached by man, that they were able to fulfill the responsibility bestowed upon them by the Creator: guarding the mountains and the forests. Their wildness protected the mountains and guarded the forests, and was the best protection and assurance of their existence and propagation. At the same time, their wildness maintained and ensured the balance among all things. Their arrival brought support and anchorage to the mountains and forests; their arrival injected boundless vigor and vitality to the still and empty mountains and forests. From this point onward, the mountains and forests became their permanent habitat, and they would never lose their home, because it was for them that the mountains and forests appeared and existed; the wild animals would fulfill their duty and do everything they could to guard them. So, too, would the wild animals strictly abide by the exhortations of the Creator to hold on to their territory, and continue to use their beastly nature to maintain the balance of all things established by the Creator, and show forth the authority and power of the Creator!

Under the Authority of the Creator, All Things Are Perfect

All things created by God, including those which could move and those which could not, such as birds and fish, such as trees and flowers, and including the livestock, insects, and wild animals made on the sixth day—they were all good in God's eyes, and, furthermore, in the eyes of God, these things, in accordance with His plan, had all attained the acme of perfection and had reached the standards that God wished to achieve. Step by step, the Creator did the work He intended to do according to His plan. One after the other, the things He intended to create appeared, and the appearance of each was a reflection of the Creator's authority, a crystallization of His authority; because of these crystallizations, all creatures could not help but be thankful for the grace and the provision of the Creator. As the miraculous deeds of God manifested themselves, this world swelled, piece by piece, with all of the things created by God, and it changed from chaos and darkness into clarity and brightness, from deathly stillness to liveliness and limitless vitality. Among all things of creation, from the great to the small, from the small to the microscopic, there was none which was not created by the authority and power of the Creator, and there was a unique and inherent necessity and value to the existence of each creature. Regardless of the differences in their shape and structure, they had but to be made by the Creator to exist under the authority of the Creator. Sometimes people will see an insect, one which is very ugly, and they will say, "That insect is so horrible, there's no way such an ugly thing could have been made by God there's no way He would create something so ugly." What a foolish view! What they should say is, "Though this insect is so ugly, it was made by God, and so it must have its own unique purpose." In the thoughts of God, He intended to give each and every appearance, and all sorts of functions and uses, to the various living things He created, and so none of the things God made were cut from the same cloth. From their exterior to their internal composition, from their living habits to the location that they occupy each is different. Cows have the appearance of cows, donkeys have the appearance of donkeys, deer have the appearance of deer, and elephants have the appearance of elephants. Can you say which is the best looking, and which is the ugliest? Can you say which is the most useful, and which one's existence is the least necessary? Some people like the way elephants look, but no one uses elephants to plant fields; some people like the way lions and tigers look, for their appearance is the most impressive amongst all things, but can you keep them as pets? In short, when it comes to the myriad things of creation, man should defer to the authority of the Creator, which is to say, defer to the order appointed by the Creator to all things; this is the wisest attitude. Only an attitude of searching for, and obedience to, the original intentions of the Creator is the true acceptance and certainty of the authority of the Creator. It is good in God's eyes, so what reason does man have to find fault?

Thus, all things under the authority of the Creator are to play a new symphony for

the sovereignty of the Creator, are to commence a brilliant prelude for His work of the new day, and at this moment the Creator will also open a new page in the work of His management! According to the law appointed by the Creator of fresh shoots in spring, ripening in summer, harvest in autumn, and storage in winter, all things will echo with the Creator's plan of management, and they will welcome their own new day, new beginning, and new life course. They will live on and reproduce in endless succession in order to welcome each day under the sovereignty of the Creator's authority ...

None of the Created and Non-created Beings Can Replace the Identity of the Creator

From when He commenced the creation of all things, the power of God began to be expressed and revealed, for God used words to create all things. Regardless of in what manner He created them, regardless of why He created them, all things came into being and stood fast and existed because of the words of God; this is the unique authority of the Creator. In the time before mankind appeared in the world, the Creator used His power and authority to create all things for mankind, and employed His unique methods to prepare a suitable living environment for mankind. All that He did was in preparation for mankind, who would soon receive His breath. This is to say, in the time before mankind was created, the authority of God was shown forth in all creatures different from mankind, in things as great as the heavens, the lights, the seas, and the land, and in those as small as animals and birds, as well as in all sorts of insects and microorganisms, including various bacteria invisible to the naked eye. Each was given life by the words of the Creator, each proliferated because of the words of the Creator, and each lived under the sovereignty of the Creator because of His words. Although they did not receive the breath of the Creator, they still showed forth the vitality of life bestowed upon them by the Creator through their different forms and structures; although they did not receive the ability to speak given to mankind by the Creator, they each received a way of expressing their life that was bestowed upon them by the Creator, and which differed from the language of man. The authority of the Creator not only gives the vitality of life to seemingly static material objects, so that they will never disappear, but He also gives the instinct to reproduce and multiply to every living being, so that they will never vanish, and so that, generation after generation, they will pass on the laws and principles of survival endowed to them by the Creator. The manner in which the Creator exerts His authority does not rigidly adhere to a macro or micro viewpoint, and is not limited to any form; He is able to command the operations of the universe and hold sovereignty over the life and death of all things, and, moreover, He is able to maneuver all things so that they serve Him; He can manage all the workings of the mountains, rivers, and lakes, and rule all things within them, and, beyond that, He is able to provide that which is needed by all things. This is the manifestation of the unique authority of the Creator amongst all things besides mankind. Such a manifestation is not just for a lifetime; it will never cease,

nor rest, and it cannot be altered or damaged by any person or thing, nor can it be added to or reduced by any person or thing—for none can replace the identity of the Creator, and, therefore, the authority of the Creator cannot be replaced by any created being; it is unattainable by any non-created being. Take God's messengers and angels for example. They do not possess the power of God, much less the authority of the Creator, and the reason why they do not have the power and authority of God is because they are not possessed of the essence of the Creator. The non-created beings, such as God's messengers and angels, although they can do some things on behalf of God, cannot represent God. Although they possess some power not possessed by man, they do not possess the authority of God, they do not possess the authority of God to create all things, to command all things, and to hold sovereignty over all things. So, the uniqueness of God cannot be replaced by any non-created being, and, similarly, the authority and power of God cannot be replaced by any non-created being. In the Bible, have you read of any messenger of God that created all things? Why did God not dispatch any of His messengers or angels to create all things? It is because they did not possess the authority of God, and so they did not possess the ability to exert the authority of God. Just like all creatures, they are all under the sovereignty of the Creator, and under the authority of the Creator, and so in the same way, the Creator is also their God and their Sovereign. Among each and every one of them—whether they be noble or lowly, of great or minor power—there is not one which can surpass the authority of the Creator, and so among them, there is not one which can replace the identity of the Creator. They shall never be called God, and shall never be able to become the Creator. These are immutable truths and facts!

Through the fellowship above, can we assert the following: only the Creator and Ruler of all things, He who is possessed of the unique authority and the unique power, can be called the unique God Himself? At this point, you may feel that such a question is too profound. You are, for the moment, incapable of understanding it, and cannot perceive the essence within, and so for now you feel that it is difficult to answer. In that case, I shall continue with My fellowship. Next, I will allow you to behold the actual deeds of many aspects of the authority and power owned by God alone, and thus I will allow you to truly understand, appreciate, and know the uniqueness of God, and what is meant by the unique authority of God.

2. God Uses His Words to Establish a Covenant With Man

Gen 9:11–13 And I will establish My covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth.

After He Makes All Things, the Authority of the Creator Is Confirmed and Shown Forth Once More in the Rainbow Covenant

The authority of the Creator is ever shown forth and exerted amongst all creatures, and He not only rules the fate of all things, but He also rules mankind, the special creature which He created with His own hands and which is possessed of a different life structure and exists in a different life form. After making all things, the Creator did not cease to express His authority and power; for Him, the authority with which He held sovereignty over all things and the fate of the whole of mankind formally began only once mankind was truly born from His hand. He intended to manage mankind, and rule mankind; He intended to save mankind and to truly gain mankind, to gain a mankind that could govern all things; He intended to make such a mankind live under His authority, and know and obey His authority. Thus, God began to officially express His authority among man using His words, and began to use His authority to realize His words. Of course, God's authority was shown forth in all places during this process; I have merely picked out some specific, well-known examples from which you may understand and know the uniqueness of God and His unique authority.

There is a similarity between the passage in Genesis 9:11–13 and the passages above concerning the record of God's creation of the world, yet there is also a difference. What is the similarity? The similarity lies in God's use of words to do that which He intended, and the difference is that the passages quoted here represent God's discourse with man, in which He established a covenant with man and told man of that which was contained within the covenant. This exertion of God's authority was achieved during His dialogue with man, which is to say that, prior to the creation of mankind, God's words were instructions and orders, which were issued to the creatures that He intended to create. But now there was someone to hear the words of God, and so His words were both a dialogue with man and also an exhortation and admonishment to man. Moreover, God's words were commandments that bore His authority and which were delivered to all things.

What action of God is recorded in this passage? The passage records the covenant that God established with man after His destruction of the world with a flood; it tells man that God would not wreak such destruction upon the world again, and that, to this end, God created a sign. What was this sign? In the Scriptures it is said that "I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." These are the original words spoken by the Creator to mankind. As He said these words, a rainbow appeared before the eyes of man, and it has remained there until this very day. Everyone has seen such a rainbow, and when you see it, do you know how it appears? Science is incapable of proving it, or of locating its source, or identifying its whereabouts. That is because the rainbow is a sign of the covenant established between the Creator and man; it requires no scientific basis, it was not made by man, nor is man capable of

altering it. It is a continuation of the Creator's authority after He spoke His words. The Creator used His own particular method to abide by His covenant with man and His promise, and so His use of the rainbow as a sign of the covenant that He had established is a heavenly edict and law that shall remain forever unchanged, whether in regard to the Creator or the created mankind. This immutable law is, it must be said, another true manifestation of the Creator's authority following His creation of all things, and it must be said that the authority and power of the Creator are limitless; His use of the rainbow as a sign is a continuation and extension of the Creator's authority. This was another act performed by God using His words, and was a sign of the covenant that God had established with man using words. He told man of that which He resolved to bring about, and in what manner it would be fulfilled and achieved. In this way the matter was fulfilled according to the words from God's mouth. Only God is possessed of such power, and today, several thousand years after He spoke these words, man can still look upon the rainbow spoken from the mouth of God. Because of those words uttered by God, this thing has remained unaltered and unchanged right up until today. None can remove this rainbow, none can change its laws, and it exists solely for the words of God. This is precisely the authority of God. "God is as good as His word, and His word will be accomplished, and that which He accomplishes lasts forever." Such words are clearly manifested here, and it is a clear sign and characteristic of the authority and power of God. Such a sign or characteristic is not possessed by or seen in any of the created beings, nor is it seen in any of the non-created beings. It belongs only to the unique God, and distinguishes the identity and essence possessed only by the Creator from that of the creatures. At the same time, it is also a sign and characteristic that, apart from God Himself, can never be surpassed by any created or non-created being.

God's establishment of His covenant with man was an act of great importance, one that He intended to use to communicate a fact to man and tell man His will. To this end He employed a unique method, using a special sign to establish a covenant with man, a sign which was a promise of the covenant that He had established with man. So, was the establishment of this covenant a great event? Just how great was it? This is exactly what is so special about the covenant: It is not a covenant established between one man and another, or one group and another, or one country and another, but a covenant established between the Creator and the whole of mankind, and it shall remain valid until the day that the Creator abolishes all things. The executor of this covenant is the Creator, and its maintainer is also the Creator. In short, the entirety of the rainbow covenant established with mankind was fulfilled and achieved according to the dialogue between the Creator and mankind, and has remained so right up until today. What else can the creatures do apart from submit to, obey, believe, appreciate, witness, and praise the authority of the Creator? For none but the unique God is possessed of the power to establish such a covenant. The appearance of the rainbow, time and time again, is an announcement to mankind and calls his attention to the covenant between the Creator

and mankind. In the continual appearances of the covenant between the Creator and mankind, what is demonstrated to mankind is not a rainbow or the covenant itself, but the immutable authority of the Creator. The recurring appearance of the rainbow demonstrates the tremendous and miraculous deeds of the Creator in hidden places, and, at the same time, is a vital reflection of the Creator's authority that will never fade away, and will never change. Is this not a display of another aspect of the Creator's unique authority?

3. The Blessings of God

Gen 17:4–6 As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made you. And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you.

Gen 18:18–19 Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment; that Jehovah may bring on Abraham that which He has spoken of him.

Gen 22:16–18 By Myself have I sworn, said Jehovah, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice.

Job 42:12 So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

The Unique Manner and Characteristics of the Creator's Utterances Are a Symbol of the Unique Identity and Authority of the Creator

Many wish to seek, and gain, the blessings of God, but not everyone can gain these blessings, for God has His own principles, and blesses man in His own way. The promises that God makes to man, and the amount of grace that He bestows upon man, are allocated based on the thoughts and actions of man. So, what is shown by the blessings of God? What can people see within them? At this point, let us put aside discussion of what kinds of people God blesses, and the principles of God's blessing of man. Instead, let us look at God's blessing of man with the objective of knowing the authority of God, from the perspective of knowing the authority of God.

The four passages of scripture above are all records about God's blessing of man. They provide a detailed description of the recipients of God's blessings, such as Abraham and Job, as well as of the reasons why God bestowed His blessings, and of what was contained within these blessings. The tone and manner of God's utterances,

and the perspective and position from which He spoke, allow people to appreciate that the One who bestows blessings and the recipient of such blessings are of a distinctly different identity, status and essence. The tone and manner of these utterances, and the position from which they were spoken, are unique to God, who possesses the identity of the Creator. He has authority and might, as well as the honor of the Creator and majesty that brooks no doubt from any man.

First let us look at Genesis 17:4-6: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made you. And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you." These words were the covenant that God established with Abraham, as well as God's blessing of Abraham: God would make Abraham the father of nations, would make him exceedingly fruitful, and would make nations of him, and kings would come of him. Do you see the authority of God in these words? And how do you see such authority? Which aspect of the essence of God's authority do you see? From a close reading of these words, it is not hard to discover that the authority and identity of God are clearly revealed in the wording of God's utterances. For example, when God says "My covenant is with you, and you shall ... have I made you ... I will make you...," phrases such as "you shall" and "I will," whose wording bears the affirmation of God's identity and authority, are, in one respect, an indication of the Creator's faithfulness; in another respect, they are special words used by God, who possesses the identity of the Creator—as well as being part of conventional vocabulary. If someone says they hope another person will be exceedingly fruitful, that nations will be made from them, and that kings shall come from them, then that is undoubtedly a kind of wish, not a promise or a blessing. So, people dare not say "I will make you such and such, you shall such and such," for they know that they do not possess such power; it is not up to them, and even if they say such things, their words would be empty nonsense, driven by their desire and ambition. Does anyone dare to speak in such a grand tone if they feel that they cannot accomplish their wishes? Everyone wishes well for their descendants, and hopes that they will excel and enjoy great success. "What great fortune it would be for one of them to become emperor! If one were to be a governor that would be good, too—just as long as they're someone important!" These are all people's wishes, but people can only wish blessings upon their descendants, and cannot fulfill or make any of their promises come true. In their hearts, everyone clearly knows that they do not possess the power to achieve such things, for everything about them is beyond their control, and so how could they command the fate of others? The reason why God can say words like these is because God possesses such authority, and is capable of accomplishing and realizing all the promises that He makes to man, and of making all the blessings that He bestows upon man come true. Man was created by God, and for God to make someone exceedingly fruitful would be child's play; to make someone's descendants prosperous would require but a word from Him. He would never have to work Himself into a sweat for such a thing, or task His mind, or tie Himself in knots over it; this is the very power of God, the very authority of God.

After reading "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" in Genesis 18:18, can you feel the authority of God? Can you sense the extraordinariness of the Creator? Can you sense the supremacy of the Creator? The words of God are certain. God does not say such words because of, or in representation of, His confidence in success; they are, instead, proof of the authority of God's utterances, and are a commandment that fulfills the words of God. There are two expressions that you should pay attention to here. When God says "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him," is there any element of ambiguity in these words? Is there any element of concern? Is there any element of fear? Because of the words "shall surely" and "shall be" in God's utterances, these elements, which are particular to man and often exhibited in him, have never borne any relation to the Creator. No one would dare to use such words when wishing others well, no one would dare to bless another with such certainty as to give them a great and mighty nation, or promise that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. The more certain the words of God, the more that they prove something—and what is that something? They prove that God has such authority, that His authority can accomplish these things, and that their accomplishment is inevitable. God was certain in His heart, without the slightest hesitation, of all that He blessed Abraham with. Furthermore, the entirety of this would be accomplished in accordance with His words, and no force would be able to alter, obstruct, impair, or disturb its fulfillment. Regardless of what else happened, nothing could abrogate or influence the fulfillment and accomplishment of God's words. This is the very might of the words uttered from the mouth of the Creator, and the authority of the Creator that does not brook the denial of man! Having read these words, do you still feel doubt? These words were spoken from the mouth of God, and there is power, majesty, and authority in the words of God. Such might and authority, and the inevitability of the accomplishment of fact, are unattainable by any created or non-created being, and unsurpassable by any created or non-created being. Only the Creator can converse with mankind with such a tone and intonation, and facts have proven that His promises are not empty words, or idle boasts, but are the expression of unique authority that is unsurpassable by any person, event, or thing.

What is the difference between the words spoken by God and the words spoken by man? When you read these words spoken by God, you sense the might of God's words and the authority of God. How do you feel when you hear people saying such words? Do you think they are extremely arrogant and boastful, people who are making a show of themselves? For they do not have this power, they do not possess such authority, and so they are completely incapable of achieving such things. That they are so sure of their

promises only shows the carelessness of their remarks. If someone says such words, then they would undoubtedly be arrogant and overconfident, and they would be revealing themselves as a classic example of the archangel's disposition. These words came from the mouth of God; do you sense any element of arrogance here? Do you feel that God's words are just a joke? The words of God are authority, the words of God are fact, and before the words are uttered from His mouth, which is to say, while He is making the decision to do something, then that thing has already been accomplished. It can be said that all that which God said to Abraham was a covenant that God established with Abraham, and a promise made by God to Abraham. This promise was an established fact, as well as an accomplished fact, and these facts were gradually fulfilled in God's thoughts according to God's plan. So, for God to say such words does not mean that He has an arrogant disposition, for God is able to achieve such things. He has this power and authority, and is fully capable of achieving these acts, and their accomplishment is entirely within the range of His ability. When words like these are uttered from the mouth of God, they are a revelation and expression of God's true disposition, a perfect revelation and manifestation of the essence and authority of God, and there is nothing more appropriate and suitable as proof of the Creator's identity. The manner, tone, and wording of such utterances are precisely the mark of the Creator's identity, and correspond perfectly to the expression of God's own identity; in them there is no pretense, no impurity; they are, completely and utterly, the perfect demonstration of the essence and authority of the Creator. As for the creatures, they possess neither this authority, nor this essence, much less do they possess the power given by God. If man manifests such behavior, then it would most certainly be the fulmination of his corrupt disposition, and at the root of this would be the meddling impact of man's arrogance and wild ambition, and the exposure of the malicious intentions of none other than the devil, Satan, who wishes to deceive people and entice them to betray God. How does God regard that which is revealed by such language? God would say that you wish to usurp His place and that you wish to impersonate and replace Him. When you imitate the tone of God's utterances, your intention is to replace God's place in people's hearts, to appropriate the mankind that rightfully belongs to God. This is Satan, pure and simple; these are the actions of the descendants of the archangel, intolerable to Heaven! Amongst you, are there any who have ever imitated God in a certain way by speaking a few words, with the intention of misleading and deceiving people, and making them feel as if the words and actions of this person carried the authority and might of God, as if this person's essence and identity were unique, and even as if the tone of this person's words was similar to God's? Have you ever done something like this? Have you ever imitated the tone of God in your speech, with gestures that purportedly represent the disposition of God, with what you suppose to be might and authority? Do most of you often act, or plan to act, in such a way? Now, when you truly see, perceive and know the authority of the Creator, and look back upon what you used to do, and what you used to reveal of yourselves, do you feel sickened? Do you recognize your ignobility and shamelessness? Having dissected the disposition and essence of such people, could it be said that they are the accursed spawn of hell? Could it be said that everyone who does such things is bringing humiliation upon themselves? Do you recognize the seriousness of its nature? Just how serious is it? The intention of people who act in this way is to imitate God. They want to be God, to make people worship them as God. They want to abolish God's place in people's hearts, and get rid of the God who works among man, and they do this in order to achieve the aim of controlling people, devouring people, and taking possession of them. Everyone has subconscious desires and ambitions like this, and everyone lives in this kind of corrupt satanic essence, in a satanic nature in which they are in enmity with God, betray God, and wish to become God. Following My fellowship on the topic of God's authority, do you still wish or aspire to impersonate or imitate God? Do you still desire to be God? Do you still wish to become God? The authority of God cannot be imitated by man, and the identity and status of God cannot be impersonated by man. Though you are capable of imitating the tone with which God speaks, you cannot imitate the essence of God. Though you are able to stand in God's place and impersonate God, you will never be able to do that which God intends to do, and will never be able to rule and command all things. In the eyes of God, you shall forever be a small creature, and regardless of how great your skills and ability are, regardless of how many gifts you have, you are, in your entirety, under the dominion of the Creator. Though you are capable of saying some brash words, this can neither show that you have the essence of the Creator, nor represent that you possess the authority of the Creator. The authority and power of God are the essence of God Himself. They were not learned or added externally, but are the inherent essence of God Himself. And so the relationship between the Creator and the creatures can never be altered. As one of the creatures, man must keep his own position, and behave conscientiously. Dutifully guard that which is entrusted to you by the Creator. Do not act out of line, or do things beyond your range of ability or which are loathsome to God. Do not try to be great, or become a superman, or above others, nor seek to become God. This is how people should not desire to be. Seeking to become great or a superman is absurd. Seeking to become God is even more disgraceful; it is disgusting, and despicable. What is commendable, and what the creatures should hold to more than anything else, is to become a true creature; this is the only goal that all people should pursue.

The Creator's Authority Is Not Constrained by Time, Space, or Geography, and the Creator's Authority Is Beyond Calculation

Let us look at Genesis 22:17–18. This is another passage spoken by Jehovah God, in which He said to Abraham, "That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the

nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice." Jehovah God blessed Abraham many times that his offspring would multiply—but to what extent would they multiply? To the extent spoken of in Scripture: "as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore." This is to say that God wished to bestow upon Abraham a progeny as numerous as the stars of heaven, and as plentiful as the sand on the sea shore. God spoke using imagery, and from this imagery it is not hard to see that God would not merely bestow one, two, or even just thousands of descendants upon Abraham, but an uncountable number, enough that they would become a multitude of nations, for God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. Now, was that number decided by man, or was it decided by God? Can man control how many descendants he has? Is it up to him? It is not even up to man whether or not he has several, let alone as many as "the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore." Who does not wish for their offspring to be as numerous as the stars? Unfortunately, things do not always turn out the way you want. Regardless of how skillful or capable man is, it is not up to him; none can stand outside of that which is ordained by God. However much He allows you, that is how much you shall have: If God gives you a little, then you shall never have a lot, and if God gives you a lot, it is no use resenting how much you have. Is this not the case? All of this is up to God, not man! Man is ruled by God, and no one is exempt!

When God said "I will multiply your seed," this was a covenant that God established with Abraham, and like the rainbow covenant, it would be accomplished for eternity, and it was also a promise made by God to Abraham. Only God is qualified and capable to make this promise come true. Regardless of whether or not man believes it, regardless of whether or not man accepts it, and regardless of how man views and regards it, all of this shall be fulfilled to the letter, according to the words spoken by God. The words of God will not be altered because of changes in the will or notions of man, and it will not be altered because of changes in any person, event or thing. All things may disappear, but the words of God will remain forever. In fact, the day that all things disappear is exactly the day upon which the words of God are completely fulfilled, for He is the Creator, He possesses the authority of the Creator, the power of the Creator, and He controls all things and all life force; He is able to cause something to come from nothing, or something to become nothing, and He controls the transformation of all things from living to dead; for God, nothing could be simpler than multiplying someone's seed. This sounds fantastical to man, like a fairytale, but to God, that which He decides and promises to do is not fantastical, nor is it a fairytale. Rather, it is a fact that God has already seen, and which shall surely be accomplished. Do you appreciate this? Do the facts prove that the descendants of Abraham were numerous? How numerous were they? Were they as numerous as "the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea shore" spoken of by God? Did they spread across all nations and regions, to every place in the world? Through what was this fact accomplished? Was it

accomplished by the authority of God's words? For several hundreds or thousands of years after the words of God were spoken, God's words continued to be fulfilled, and were constantly becoming facts; this is the might of God's words, and proof of the authority of God. When God created all things in the beginning, God said "let there be light," and there was light. This happened very quickly, was fulfilled in a very short time, and there was no delay in its accomplishment and fulfillment; the effects of God's words were immediate. Both were a display of God's authority, but when God blessed Abraham, He allowed man to see another side of the essence of God's authority, as well as the fact that the Creator's authority is beyond calculation, and moreover, He allowed man to see a more real, more exquisite side of the Creator's authority.

Once the words of God are uttered, the authority of God takes command of this work, and the fact promised by the mouth of God gradually begins to become a reality. As a result, changes begin to appear amongst all things, much like how, at the arrival of spring, the grass turns green, the flowers bloom, buds sprout from the trees, the birds begin to sing, the geese return, and the fields teem with people.... With the arrival of spring all things are rejuvenated, and this is the miraculous deed of the Creator. When God accomplishes His promises, all things in heaven and on earth renew and change in accordance with the thoughts of God—none is exempt. When a commitment or promise is uttered from the mouth of God, all things serve its fulfillment, and are maneuvered for the sake of its fulfillment; all creatures are orchestrated and arranged under the dominion of the Creator, playing their respective role, and serving their respective function. This is the manifestation of the Creator's authority. What do you see in this? How do you know the authority of God? Is there a range to God's authority? Is there a time limit? Can it be said to be a certain height, or a certain length? Can it be said to be a certain size or strength? Can it be measured by the dimensions of man? The authority of God does not flicker on and off, does not come and go, and there is no one who can measure just how great His authority is. Regardless of how much time passes, when God blesses a person, this blessing will continue forth, and its continuation will bear testament to the inestimable authority of God, and will allow mankind to behold the reappearance of the inextinguishable life force of the Creator, time and time again. Each display of His authority is the perfect demonstration of the words from His mouth, which is demonstrated to all things, and to mankind. Furthermore, everything accomplished by His authority is exquisite beyond compare, and utterly flawless. It can be said that His thoughts, His words, His authority, and all the work that He accomplishes are all an incomparably beautiful picture, and for the creatures, the language of mankind is incapable of articulating its significance and value. When God makes a promise to a person, everything about them is as familiar to God as the back of His own hand, whether it be where they live, or what they do, their background before or after they receive the promise, or how great have been the upheavals in their living environment. No matter how much time elapses after God's words have been spoken, for Him, it is as if they

have just been uttered. This is to say that God has the power, and has such authority that He can keep track of, control, and fulfill every promise He makes to mankind, and regardless of what the promise is, regardless of how long it takes to be completely fulfilled, and, moreover, regardless of how broad the scope that its accomplishment touches upon—for example, time, geography, race, and so on—this promise will be accomplished and fulfilled, and, furthermore, its accomplishment and fulfillment will not require Him the slightest effort. What does this prove? It proves that the breadth of God's authority and power is enough to control the whole of the universe, and the whole of mankind. God made light, but that does not mean God only manages light, or that He only manages water because He created water, and that everything else is unrelated to God. Would this not be a misunderstanding? Although God's blessing of Abraham had gradually faded from the memory of man after several hundred years, for God, this promise still remained the same. It was still in the process of accomplishment, and had never stopped. Man never knew or heard how God exerted His authority, how all things were orchestrated and arranged, and how many wonderful stories occurred among all things of God's creation during this time, but every wonderful piece of the display of God's authority and the revelation of His deeds was passed on and exalted among all things, all things showed forth and spoke of the miraculous deeds of the Creator, and each much-told story of the Creator's sovereignty over all things shall be proclaimed by all things forever more. The authority by which God rules all things, and the power of God, show to all things that God is present everywhere and at all times. When you have witnessed the ubiquity of the authority and power of God, you will see that God is present everywhere and at all times. The authority and power of God are unconstrained by time, geography, space, or any person, event or thing. The breadth of God's authority and power surpasses the imagination of man; it is unfathomable to man, unimaginable to man, and shall never be completely known by man.

Some people like to infer and imagine, but how far can man's imagination reach? Can it go beyond this world? Is man capable of inferring and imagining the authenticity and accuracy of God's authority? Are the inference and imagination of man capable of allowing him to achieve a knowledge of God's authority? Can they make man truly appreciate and submit to the authority of God? Facts prove that the inference and imagination of man are only a product of man's intellect, and provide not the slightest help or benefit to man's knowledge of God's authority. After reading science fiction, some are able to imagine the moon, or what the stars are like. Yet this does not mean that man has any understanding of the authority of God. Man's imagination is just that: imagination. Of the facts of these things, which is to say, of their connection to God's authority, he has absolutely no grasp. What does it matter even if you have been to the moon? Does this show that you have a multidimensional understanding of God's authority? Does it show that you are able to imagine the breadth of God's authority and power? Since the inference and imagination of man are incapable of allowing him to

know the authority of God, what should man do? The wisest option would be to not infer or imagine, which is to say that man must never rely on imagination and depend on inference when it comes to knowing the authority of God. What is it I wish to say to you here? Knowledge of God's authority, God's power, God's own identity, and God's essence cannot be achieved by relying on your imagination. Since you cannot rely on imagination to know the authority of God, then in what way can you achieve a true knowledge of God's authority? The way to do this is through eating and drinking the words of God, through fellowship, and through experiencing the words of God. Thus, you will have a gradual experience and verification of God's authority and you will gain a gradual understanding and incremental knowledge of it. This is the only way to achieve the knowledge of God's authority; there are no shortcuts. Asking you not to imagine is not the same as making you sit passively to await destruction, or stopping you from doing anything. Not using your brain to think and imagine means not using logic to infer, not using knowledge to analyze, not using science as the basis, but instead appreciating, verifying, and confirming that the God you believe in has authority, confirming that He holds sovereignty over your fate, and that His power at all times proves Him to be the true God Himself, through the words of God, through the truth, through everything that you encounter in life. This is the only way that anyone can achieve an understanding of God. Some say that they wish to find a simple way of achieving this aim, but can you think of such a way? I tell you, there is no need to think: There are no other ways! The only way is to conscientiously and steadfastly know and verify what God has and is through every word that He expresses and everything that He does. This is the only way to know God. For what God has and is, and everything of God, is not hollow and empty, but real.

The Fact of the Creator's Control and Dominion Over All Things and Living Beings Speaks of the True Existence of the Creator's Authority

Similarly, Jehovah's blessing of Job is recorded in the Book of Job. What did God bestow upon Job? "So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses" (Job 42:12). From man's perspective, what were these things that were given to Job? Were they assets of mankind? With these assets, would Job not have been very wealthy during that age? Then, how did he acquire such assets? What caused his wealth? It goes without saying—it was thanks to the blessing of God that Job came to possess them. How Job viewed these assets, and how he regarded the blessings of God, is not something we will discuss here. When it comes to the blessings of God, all people yearn, day and night, to be blessed by God, yet man has no control over how many assets he can gain during his lifetime, or whether he can receive blessings from God—this is an indisputable fact! God has authority, and the power to bestow any assets upon man, to allow man to obtain any benediction, and yet there is a

principle to God's blessings. What kind of people does God bless? He blesses the people that He likes, of course! Abraham and Job were both blessed by God, yet the blessings which they received were not the same. God blessed Abraham with descendants as numerous as the sand and the stars. When God blessed Abraham, He caused the descendants of a single man, and one nation, to become powerful and prosperous. In this, the authority of God ruled mankind, who breathed the breath of God among all things and living beings. Under the sovereignty of God's authority, this mankind proliferated and existed at a speed decided by God, and within a scope decided by God. Specifically, this nation's viability, rate of expansion, and life expectancy were all part of God's arrangements, and the principle of all of this was wholly based on the promise that God made to Abraham. This is to say that, regardless of the circumstances, God's promises would proceed without hindrance and be realized under the providence of God's authority. In the promise that God made to Abraham, regardless of the world's upheavals, regardless of the era, regardless of the catastrophes endured by mankind, the descendants of Abraham would not face the risk of annihilation, and their nation would not die out. God's blessing of Job, however, made him extremely wealthy. What God gave him was an array of living, breathing creatures, the particulars of which—their number, their speed of propagation, survival rates, the amount of fat in their bodies, and so on—were also controlled by God. Though these living beings did not possess the ability to speak, they too were part of the Creator's arrangements, and the principle behind God's arrangements for them was made on the basis of the blessings that God promised to Job. In the blessings that God gave to Abraham and Job, though what was promised was different, the authority with which the Creator ruled all things and living beings was the same. Every detail of God's authority and power is expressed in His different promises and blessings to Abraham and Job, and shows mankind, once again, that the authority of God is far beyond man's imagination. These details tell mankind once more that if he wishes to know God's authority, then this can only be achieved through God's words and through experiencing God's work.

God's authority of sovereignty over all things allows man to see a fact: God's authority is not only embodied in the words "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light, and, Let there be firmament, and there was firmament, and, Let there be land, and there was land," but, moreover, His authority is also embodied in how He made the light continue, prevented the firmament from disappearing, and kept the land forever separate from the water, as well as in the details of how He ruled over and managed the things He created: light, firmament, and land. What else do you see in God's blessing of mankind? Clearly, after God blessed Abraham and Job, God's footsteps did not cease, for He had only just begun to exert His authority, and He intended to make every one of His words a reality, and to make every one of the details of which He spoke come true, and so, in the years to come, He continued doing everything that He intended. Because God has authority, perhaps it seems to man that God only need speak, and without lifting

a finger, all matters and things are accomplished. Such imaginings are quite ridiculous! If you only take the one-sided view of God's establishment of the covenant with man using words, and of God's accomplishment of everything using words, and you are incapable of seeing the various signs and facts that the authority of God holds dominion over the existence of all things, then your understanding of God's authority is so hollow and ridiculous! If man imagines God to be thus, then, it must be said, man's knowledge of God has been driven to the last ditch, and has reached a dead end, for the God that man imagines is but a machine that issues orders, not the God who is possessed of authority. What have you seen through the examples of Abraham and Job? Have you seen the real side of God's authority and power? After God blessed Abraham and Job, God did not stay where He was, nor did He put His messengers to work while waiting to see what the outcome would be. On the contrary, as soon as God uttered His words, under the guidance of God's authority, all things began to comply with the work that God intended to do, and there were prepared the people, things, and objects that God required. This is to say that, as soon as the words were uttered from the mouth of God, God's authority began to be exerted across the whole land, and He set a course to accomplish and fulfill the promises that He made to Abraham and Job, while also making all the proper plans and preparations for all that was required for every step and each key stage He planned to carry out. During this time, God not only maneuvered His messengers, but also all things that had been created by Him. This is to say that the scope within which God's authority was exerted not only included the messengers, but, all things in creation, which were maneuvered in order to comply with the work that He intended to accomplish; these were the specific manners in which the authority of God was exerted. In your imaginings, some may have the following understanding of God's authority: God has authority, and God has power, and so God need only remain in the third heaven, or in a fixed place, and need not do any particular work, and the entirety of God's work is completed within His thoughts. Some may also believe that, although God blessed Abraham, God did not need to do anything, and it was enough for Him to merely speak His words. Is this what really happened? Clearly not! Although God is possessed of authority and power, His authority is true and real, not empty. The authenticity and reality of God's authority and power are gradually revealed and embodied in His creation of all things, in His control over all things, and in the process by which He leads and manages mankind. Every method, every perspective, and every detail of God's sovereignty over mankind and all things, and all the work that He has accomplished, as well as His understanding of all things—they all literally prove that the authority and power of God are not empty words. His authority and power are shown forth and revealed constantly, and in all things. These manifestations and revelations speak of the real existence of God's authority, for He is using His authority and power to continue His work, and to command all things, and to rule all things at every moment; His power and authority can be replaced neither by the angels, nor by the messengers of God. God decided what blessings He would bestow upon Abraham and Job—it was God's decision to make. Even though the messengers of God personally visited Abraham and Job, their actions were based on the commandments of God, and their actions were taken under the authority of God and likewise, the messengers were under the sovereignty of God. Although man sees the messengers of God visit Abraham, and does not witness Jehovah God personally do anything in the records of the Bible, in fact, the only One who truly exerts power and authority is God Himself, and this brooks no doubt from any man! Although you have seen that the angels and the messengers possess great power and have performed miracles, or that they have done some things commissioned by God, their actions are merely for the sake of completing God's commission, and are by no means a display of the authority of God—for no man or object has, or possesses, the authority of the Creator to create all things and rule all things. So, no man or object can exert or show forth the authority of the Creator.

The Authority of the Creator Is Immutable and Unoffendable

What have you seen in these three parts of scripture? Have you seen that there is a principle by which God exerts His authority? For example, God used a rainbow to establish a covenant with man—He placed a rainbow in the clouds in order to tell man that He would never again use a flood to destroy the world. Is the rainbow people see today still the same one that was spoken from the mouth of God? Has its nature and meaning changed? Without a doubt, it has not. God used His authority to carry out this action, and the covenant that He established with man has continued until today, and the time at which this covenant shall be altered will, of course, be God's decision. After God said "set My bow in the cloud," God always abided by this covenant, right up until today. What do you see in this? Although God is possessed of authority and power, He is very rigorous and principled in His actions, and stays true to His word. His rigorousness, and the principles of His actions, show the unoffendableness of the Creator and the insuperability of the Creator's authority. Though He is possessed of supreme authority, and all things are under His dominion, and although He has the power to rule all things, God has never damaged or disrupted His own plan, and each time He exerts His authority, it is in strict accordance with His own principles, and precisely follows that which was spoken from His mouth, and follows the steps and objectives of His plan. Needless to say, all things ruled by God also obey the principles by which God's authority is exerted, and no man or thing is exempt from the arrangements of His authority, nor can they alter the principles by which His authority is exerted. In God's eyes, those who are blessed receive the good fortune brought about by His authority, and those who are cursed receive their punishment because of God's authority. Under the sovereignty of God's authority, no man or thing is exempt from the exertion of His authority, nor can they alter the principles by which His authority is exerted. The authority of the Creator is not altered by changes in any factor, and, similarly, the principles by

which His authority is exerted do not alter for any reason. Heaven and earth may undergo great upheavals, but the authority of the Creator will not change; all things may vanish, but the authority of the Creator will never disappear. This is the essence of the Creator's immutable and unoffendable authority, and this is the very uniqueness of the Creator!

The words below are indispensable to knowing the authority of God, and their meaning is given in the fellowship below. Let us continue reading Scripture.

4. God's Command to Satan

Job 2:6 And Jehovah said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life.

Satan Has Never Dared to Transgress the Authority of the Creator, and Because of This, All Things Live in Order

This is an excerpt from the Book of Job, and the "he" in these words refers to Job. Though brief, this sentence elucidates many issues. It describes a particular exchange between God and Satan in the spiritual world, and tells us that the object of God's words was Satan. It also records what was specifically said by God. God's words were a command and an order to Satan. The specific details of this order relate to sparing the life of Job and where God drew the line in Satan's treatment of Job—Satan had to spare Job's life. The first thing we learn from this sentence is that these were words spoken by God to Satan. According to the original text of the Book of Job, it tells us the background to such words: Satan wished to accuse Job, and so it had to obtain the agreement of God before it could tempt him. When consenting to Satan's request to tempt Job, God put forward the following condition to Satan: "Job is in your hand; but save his life." What is the nature of these words? They are clearly a command, an order. Having understood the nature of these words, you should, of course, also grasp that the One who issued this order was God, and that the one who received this order, and obeyed it, was Satan. Needless to say, in this order, the relationship between God and Satan is evident to anyone who reads these words. Of course, this is also the relationship between God and Satan in the spiritual world, and the difference between the identity and status of God and Satan, provided in the records of the exchanges between God and Satan in the Scriptures, and is the distinct difference between the identity and status of God and Satan that to date man can learn of in the specific example and textual record. At this point, I must say that the record of these words is an important document in mankind's knowledge of the identity and status of God, and it provides important information for mankind's knowledge of God. Through this exchange between the Creator and Satan in the spiritual world, man is able to understand one more specific aspect in the authority of the Creator. These words are another testimony to the unique authority of the Creator.

Outwardly, Jehovah God is engaging in a dialogue with Satan. In terms of essence, the attitude with which Jehovah God speaks, and the position in which He stands are higher than Satan. This is to say that Jehovah God is commanding Satan with the tone

of an order, and is telling Satan what it should and should not do, that Job is already in its hands, and that it is free to treat Job however it wishes—but that it may not take Job's life. The subtext is that, although Job has been placed in Satan's hands, his life is not given over to Satan; no one can take the life of Job from God's hands unless permitted by God. God's attitude is clearly articulated in this command to Satan, and this command also manifests and reveals the position from which Jehovah God converses with Satan. In this, Jehovah God not only holds the status of God who created light, and air, and all things and living beings, of the God who holds sovereignty over all things and living beings, but also of the God who commands mankind, and commands Hades, the God who controls the life and death of all living things. In the spiritual world, who apart from God would dare to issue such an order to Satan? And why did God personally issue His order to Satan? Because the life of man, including that of Job, is controlled by God. God did not permit Satan to harm or take the life of Job, and even when God permitted Satan to tempt Job, God still remembered to specially issue such an order, and once again commanded Satan not to take the life of Job. Satan has never dared to transgress the authority of God, and, moreover, has always carefully listened to and obeyed the orders and specific commands of God, never daring to defy them, and, of course, not daring to freely alter any of God's orders. Such are the limits that God has set out for Satan, and so Satan has never dared to cross these limits. Is this not the might of God's authority? Is this not a testimony to God's authority? Satan has a much clearer grasp than mankind of how to behave toward God, and how to view God, and so, in the spiritual world, Satan sees the status and authority of God very clearly, and has a deep appreciation of the might of God's authority and the principles behind the exertion of His authority. It does not dare, at all, to overlook them, nor does it dare to violate them in any way, or do anything that transgresses the authority of God, and it does not dare to challenge God's wrath in any way. Though it is evil and arrogant in nature, Satan has never dared to cross the boundaries and limits set out for it by God. For millions of years, it has strictly abided by these boundaries, has abided by every command and order given to it by God, and has never dared to overstep the mark. Though it is malicious, Satan is much wiser than corrupt mankind; it knows the identity of the Creator, and knows its own boundaries. From Satan's "submissive" actions it can be seen that the authority and power of God are heavenly edicts which cannot be transgressed by Satan, and that it is precisely because of the uniqueness and authority of God that all things change and propagate in an orderly way, that mankind can live and multiply within the course established by God, with no person or object capable of upsetting this order, and no person or object capable of changing this law—for they all come from the hands of the Creator, and from the order and authority of the Creator.

Only God, Who Has the Identity of the Creator, Possesses the Unique Authority

The special identity of Satan has caused many people to exhibit a strong interest in its manifestations of various aspects. There are even many foolish people who believe that, as well as God, Satan is also possessed of authority, for Satan is capable of showing miracles, and is capable of doing things that are impossible to mankind. Thus, in addition to worshiping God, mankind also reserves a place for Satan in his heart, and even worships Satan as God. These people are both pitiable and detestable. They are pitiable because of their ignorance, and detestable because of their heresy and inherently evil substance. At this point, I feel that it is necessary to inform you of what authority is, what it symbolizes, and what it represents. Broadly speaking, God Himself is authority. His authority symbolizes the supremacy and essence of God, and the authority of God Himself represents the status and identity of God. Since this is the case, does Satan dare to say that it itself is God? Does Satan dare to say that it created all things, and holds sovereignty over all things? Of course it does not! For it is incapable of creating all things; to date, it has never made anything created by God, and has never created anything that has life. Because it does not have God's authority, it could never possibly possess the status and identity of God, and this is determined by its essence. Does it have the same power as God? Of course it does not! What do we call the acts of Satan, and the miracles exhibited by Satan? Is it power? Could it be called authority? Of course not! Satan directs the tide of evil, and upsets, impairs, and interrupts every aspect of God's work. For the last several thousand years, apart from corrupting and abusing mankind, and luring and deceiving man to depravity and to rejecting God so that man walks toward the valley of the shadow of death, has Satan done anything that deserves even the slightest commemoration, commendation, or cherishment by man? If Satan possessed authority and power, would mankind have been corrupted by it? If Satan possessed authority and power, would mankind have been harmed by it? If Satan possessed power and authority, would mankind have forsaken God and turned to death? Since Satan has no authority or power, what should we conclude about the essence of all that it does? There are those who define all that Satan does as mere trickery, yet I believe that such a definition is not so appropriate. Are the evil deeds of its corruption of mankind mere trickery? The evil force with which Satan abused Job, and its fierce desire to abuse and devour him, could not possibly be achieved by mere trickery. Looking back, in an instant, the flocks and herds of Job, scattered far and wide across hills and mountains, were gone; in an instant, Job's great fortune disappeared. Could that have been achieved by mere trickery? The nature of all that Satan does corresponds to and fits with negative terms such as to impair, to interrupt, to destroy, to harm, evil, maliciousness, and darkness, and so the occurrence of all that is unrighteous and evil is inextricably linked to the acts of Satan, and is inseparable from the evil

essence of Satan. Regardless of how "powerful" Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but, moreover, must obey all of God's orders and commands. Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God. In the eyes of God, Satan is inferior to the lilies on the mountain, to the birds flying in the air, to the fish in the sea, and to the maggots on the earth. Its role among all things is to serve all things, and work for mankind, and serve God's work and His plan of management. Regardless of how malicious its nature, and how evil its essence, the only thing it can do is to dutifully abide by its function: being of service to God, and providing a counterpoint to God. Such is the substance and position of Satan. Its essence is unconnected to life, unconnected to power, unconnected to authority; it is merely a plaything in God's hands, just a machine in service to God!

Having understood the true face of Satan, many people still do not understand what authority is, so let Me tell you! The authority itself can be explained as the power of God. Firstly, it can be said with certainty that both authority and power are positive. They have no connection to anything negative, and are unrelated to any created or non-created beings. The power of God is able to create things of any form that have life and vitality, and this is determined by the life of God. God is life, so He is the source of all living beings. Furthermore, the authority of God can make all living beings obey every word of God, that is, come into being according to the words from God's mouth, and live and reproduce by God's command, after which God rules and commands all living beings, and there shall never be a deviation, forever and ever. No person or object has these things; only the Creator possesses and bears such power, and so it is called authority. This is the uniqueness of the Creator. As such, regardless of whether it is the word "authority" itself or the essence of this authority, each can only be associated with the Creator, because it is a symbol of the unique identity and essence of the Creator, and it represents the identity and status of the Creator; apart from the Creator, no person or object can be associated with the word "authority." This is an interpretation of the unique authority of the Creator.

Though Satan looked upon Job with covetous eyes, without God's permission it did

not dare to touch a single hair on Job's body. Though Satan is inherently evil and cruel, after God issued His order to it, it had no choice but to abide by God's command. Thus, even though Satan was as frenzied as a wolf among sheep when it came upon Job, it did not dare to forget the limits set for it by God, did not dare to violate the orders of God, and in all that it did, Satan did not dare to deviate from the principles and limits of God's words—is this not a fact? From this it can be seen that Satan does not dare to contravene any of the words of Jehovah God. For Satan, every word from the mouth of God is an order and a heavenly law, an expression of God's authority—for behind every word of God is implied God's punishment of those who violate the orders of God, and of those who disobey and oppose the heavenly laws. Satan clearly knows that if it violates God's orders, then it must accept the consequences of transgressing the authority of God and opposing the heavenly laws. Just what are these consequences? Needless to say, they are its punishment by God. Satan's actions toward Job were merely a microcosm of its corruption of man, and when Satan was carrying out these actions, the limits that God set and the orders that He issued to Satan were merely a microcosm of the principles behind everything that it does. In addition, the role and position of Satan in this matter was merely a microcosm of its role and position in the work of God's management, and Satan's complete obedience to God in its temptation of Job was merely a microcosm of how Satan did not dare to pose the slightest opposition to God in the work of God's management. What warning do these microcosms give you? Among all things, including Satan, there is no person or thing that can transgress the heavenly laws and edicts set out by the Creator, and no person or thing that dares to violate these heavenly laws and edicts, for no person or object can alter or escape from the punishment that the Creator inflicts upon those who disobey them. Only the Creator can establish heavenly laws and edicts, only the Creator has the power to put them into effect, and only the power of the Creator cannot be transgressed by any person or thing. This is the unique authority of the Creator, and this authority is supreme among all things, and so, it is impossible to say that "God is the greatest and Satan is number two." Except for the Creator who is possessed of the unique authority, there is no other God!

Do you now have a new knowledge of God's authority? Firstly, is there a difference between the authority of God just mentioned, and the power of man? What is the difference? Some people say that there is no comparison between the two. That is correct! Though people say there is no comparison between the two, in the thoughts and notions of man, the power of man is often confused with authority, and the two are often compared side by side. What is going on here? Are not people making the mistake of inadvertently substituting one with the other? The two are unconnected, and there is no comparison between them, yet people still cannot help themselves. How should this be resolved? If you truly wish to find a resolution, the only way is to understand and know the unique authority of God. After understanding and knowing

the authority of the Creator, you will not mention the power of man and the authority of God in the same breath.

What does the power of man refer to? Simply put, it is an ability or skill which enables the corrupt disposition, desires and ambitions of man to be expanded or accomplished to the greatest extent. Does this count as authority? Regardless of how swollen or lucrative the ambitions and desires of man, that person cannot be said to possess authority; at most, this puffing up and success is merely a demonstration of Satan's buffoonery among man; at most it is a farce in which Satan acts as its own ancestor in order to fulfill its ambition to be God.

How exactly do you view the authority of God now? Now that these words have been fellowshiped, you should have a new knowledge of God's authority. So I ask you: What does God's authority symbolize? Does it symbolize the identity of God Himself? Does it symbolize the power of God Himself? Does it symbolize the unique status of God Himself? Amongst all things, in what have you seen the authority of God? How did you see it? In terms of the four seasons experienced by man, can anyone change the law of the interchange between spring, summer, autumn and winter? In spring, the trees bud and bloom; in summer they are covered with leaves; in autumn they bear fruit, and in winter the leaves fall. Is anyone able to alter this law? Does this reflect one aspect of God's authority? God said "Let there be light," and there was light. Does this light still exist? What does it exist because of? It exists because of the words of God, of course, and because of the authority of God. Does the air created by God still exist? Does the air that man breathes come from God? Can anyone take away the things that come from God? Can anyone alter their essence and function? Is anyone able to disconcert the night and day allocated by God, and the law of night and day ordered by God? Can Satan do such a thing? Even if you do not sleep at night, and take night as day, then it is still nighttime; you may change your daily routine, but you are incapable of changing the law of the interchange between night and day—this fact is unalterable by any person, is it not? Is anyone capable of making a lion plow the land like an ox? Is anyone capable of changing an elephant into a donkey? Is anyone capable of making a chicken soar through the air like an eagle? Is anyone capable of making a wolf eat grass like a sheep? (No.) Is anyone capable of making the fish in the water live on dry land? That cannot be done by humans. Why not? It is because God commanded the fish to live in water, and so they live in water. On land they would not be able to survive, and would die; they are unable to transgress the limits of God's command. All things have a law and limit to their existence, and they each have their own instincts. These are ordained by the Creator, and are unalterable and unsurpassable by any man. For example, the lion will always live in the wild, at a distance from the communities of man, and could never be as docile and faithful as the ox that lives together with and works for man. Although elephants and donkeys are both animals and both have four legs, and are creatures that breathe air, they are different species, for they were divided into different types by God, they each

have their own instincts, and so they will never be interchangeable. Although the chicken has two legs and wings just like an eagle, it will never be able to fly in the air; at most it can only fly into a tree—this is determined by its instinct. Needless to say, this is all because of the commands of the authority of God.

In the development of mankind today, the science of mankind can be said to be flourishing, and the achievements of man's scientific exploration can be described as impressive. Man's ability, it must be said, is growing ever greater, but there is one scientific breakthrough that mankind has been unable to make: Mankind has made airplanes, aircraft carriers, and the atomic bomb, mankind has gone into space, walked on the moon, invented the Internet, and come to live a hi-tech lifestyle, yet mankind is incapable of creating a living, breathing thing. The instincts of every living creature and the laws by which they live, and the cycle of life and death of every kind of living thing all these are beyond the power of mankind's science, and cannot be controlled by it. At this point, it must be said that no matter what great heights are attained by the science of man, it is incomparable to any of the thoughts of the Creator, and is incapable of discerning the miraculousness of the Creator's creation and the might of His authority. There are so many oceans upon the earth, yet they have never transgressed their limits and come upon land at will, and that is because God set boundaries for each of them; they stayed wherever He commanded them, and without God's permission they cannot move around freely. Without God's permission, they may not infringe upon each other, and can only move when God says so, and where they go and stay is determined by the authority of God.

To put it plainly, "the authority of God" means that it is up to God. God has the right to decide how to do something, and it is done in whatever way He wishes. The law of all things is up to God, and not up to man; neither can it be altered by man. It cannot be moved by the will of man, but is instead changed by the thoughts of God, the wisdom of God, and the orders of God; this is a fact that is undeniable to any man. The heavens and earth and all things, the universe, the starry sky, the four seasons of the year, that which is visible and invisible to man—they all exist, function, and change without the slightest error, under the authority of God, according to the orders of God, according to the commandments of God, and according to the laws of the beginning of creation. Not a single person or object can change their laws, or change the inherent course by which they function; they came into being because of the authority of God, and perish because of the authority of God. This is the very authority of God. Now that this much has been said, can you feel that the authority of God is a symbol of the identity and status of God? Can the authority of God be possessed by any created or non-created being? Can it be imitated, impersonated, or replaced by any person, thing, or object?

The Creator's Identity Is Unique, and You Should Not Abide by the Idea of Polytheism

Although the skills and abilities of Satan are greater than those of man, although it can do things that are unattainable by man, regardless of whether you envy or aspire to what Satan does, regardless of whether you hate or are disgusted by these things, regardless of whether or not you are capable of seeing them, and regardless of how much Satan can achieve, or how many people it can deceive into worshiping and enshrining it, and regardless of how you define it, you cannot possibly say that it has the authority and power of God. You should know that God is God, there is only one God, and moreover, you should know that only God has authority, that only God has the power to control and rule all things. Just because Satan has the ability to deceive people and can impersonate God, imitate the signs and miracles made by God, and has done similar things as God, you mistakenly believe that God is not unique, that there are many Gods, that these different Gods merely have greater or lesser skills, and that there are differences in the breadth of the power that they wield. You rank their greatness in the order of their arrival and according to their age, and you wrongly believe that there are other deities apart from God, and think that the power and authority of God are not unique. If you have such ideas, if you do not recognize the uniqueness of God, do not believe that only God is possessed of authority, and if you only abide by polytheism, then I say that you are the scum of the creatures, you are the true embodiment of Satan, and you are an absolute person of evil! Do you understand what I am trying to teach you by saying these words? No matter what the time, place, or your background, you must not confuse God with any other person, thing, or object. Regardless of how unknowable and unapproachable you feel the authority of God and essence of God Himself is, regardless of how much the deeds and words of Satan agree with your notion and imagination, regardless of how satisfying they are to you, do not be foolish, do not confuse these concepts, do not deny the existence of God, do not deny the identity and status of God, do not push God out the door and bring in Satan to replace the God within your heart and be your God. I have no doubt that you are capable of imagining the consequences of doing so!

Though Mankind Has Been Corrupted, He Still Lives Under the Sovereignty of the Creator's Authority

Satan has been corrupting mankind for thousands of years. It has wrought untold amounts of evil, has deceived generation after generation, and has committed heinous crimes in the world. It has abused man, deceived man, seduced man to oppose God, and has committed evil acts that have confounded and impaired God's plan of management time and time again. Yet, under the authority of God, all things and living creatures continue to abide by the rules and laws set down by God. Compared to the authority of God, Satan's evil nature and rampancy are so ugly, so disgusting and

despicable, and so small and vulnerable. Even though Satan walks among all things created by God, it is not able to enact the slightest change in the people, things, and objects commanded by God. Several thousand years have passed, and mankind still enjoys the light and air bestowed by God, still breathes the breath exhaled by God Himself, still enjoys the flowers, birds, fish and insects created by God, and enjoys all the things provided by God; day and night still continually replace each other; the four seasons alternate as usual; the geese flying in the sky depart in the winter, and still return in the next spring; the fish in the water never leave the rivers and lakes—their home; the cicadas on the earth sing their hearts out during the summer days; the crickets in the grass gently hum in time to the wind during autumn; the geese gather into flocks, while the eagles remain solitary; the prides of lions sustain themselves by hunting; the elk do not stray from the grass and flowers.... Every kind of living creature amongst all things departs and returns, and then departs again, a million changes occurring in the twinkling of an eye—but what does not change are their instincts and the laws of survival. They live under the provision and nourishment of God, and no one can change their instincts, and neither can anyone impair their rules of survival. Although mankind, who lives among all things, has been corrupted and deceived by Satan, man still cannot forgo the water made by God, and the air made by God, and all things made by God, and man still lives and proliferates in this space created by God. The instincts of mankind have not changed. Man still relies on his eyes to see, on his ears to hear, on his brain to think, on his heart to understand, on his legs and feet to walk, on his hands to work, and so on; all the instincts that God bestowed upon man in order that he could accept the provision of God remain unaltered, the faculties through which man cooperates with God have not changed, mankind's faculty for performing the duty of a created being has not changed, mankind's spiritual needs have not changed, mankind's desire to find his origins has not changed, mankind's yearning to be saved by the Creator has not changed. Such are the current circumstances of mankind, who lives under the authority of God, and who has endured the bloody destruction wrought by Satan. Though mankind has been subjected to the oppression of Satan, and is no longer Adam and Eve from the beginning of creation, but instead is full of things that are antagonistic to God, such as knowledge, imagination, notions, and so on, and full of the corrupt satanic disposition, in the eyes of God, mankind is still the same mankind that He created. Mankind is still ruled and orchestrated by God, and still lives within the course set out by God, and so in the eyes of God, mankind, who has been corrupted by Satan, is merely covered in grime, with a rumbling tummy, with reactions that are a little slow, a memory that is not as good as it used to be, and is slightly older—but all the functions and instincts of man are completely undamaged. This is the mankind that God intends to save. This mankind has but to hear the call of the Creator, and hear the voice of the Creator, and he will stand up and rush to locate the source of this voice. This mankind has but to see the figure of the Creator and he will become heedless of all else, and forsake everything, in order to

devote himself to God, and will even lay down his life for Him. When the heart of mankind understands the heartfelt words of the Creator, mankind will reject Satan and come to the side of the Creator; when mankind has completely washed the dirt from his body, and has once more received the provision and nourishment of the Creator, then the memory of mankind will be restored, and at this time mankind will have truly returned to the dominion of the Creator.

December 14, 2013

God Himself, the Unique II God's Righteous Disposition

Now that you have heard the previous fellowship about God's authority, I am confident that you are equipped with a good many words on the matter. How much you can accept, grasp and understand all depends on how much effort you apply to it. It is My hope that you can approach this matter earnestly; by no means should you engage with it half-heartedly! Now, is knowing God's authority equal to knowing God's entirety? One can say that knowing God's authority is the beginning of knowing God Himself, the unique, and one could also say that knowing God's authority means that one has already stepped through the gate of knowing the essence of God Himself, the unique. This understanding is one part of knowing God. So, what is the other part? This is the subject that I would like to fellowship about today—God's righteous disposition.

I have selected two sections from the Bible with which to fellowship about today's topic: The first concerns God's destruction of Sodom, which can be found in Genesis 19:1–11 and Genesis 19:24–25; the second concerns God's deliverance of Nineveh, which can be found in Jonah 1:1–2, in addition to the third and fourth chapters of the book of Jonah. I suspect that you are all waiting to hear what I have to say about these two sections. What I say naturally cannot stray beyond the scope of knowing God Himself and knowing His essence, but what will be the focus of today's fellowship? Do any of you know? Which parts of My fellowship on God's authority caught your attention? Why did I say that only the One who possesses such authority and power is God Himself? What did I wish to elucidate by saying that? What did I wish for you to learn from it? Are God's authority and power one aspect of how His essence is expressed? Are they a part of His essence, a part that proves His identity and status? Judging from these questions, can you tell what I am going to say? What do I want you to understand? Think this over carefully.

For Stubbornly Opposing God, Man Is Destroyed by God's Wrath

First, let us look at several passages of scripture which describe God's destruction of Sodom.

Gen 19:1–11 And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and you shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, No; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed on them greatly; and they turned in to him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called to Lot, and said to him, Where are the men which came in to you this night? bring them

out to us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door to them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brothers, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out to you, and do you to them as is good in your eyes: only to these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with you, than with them. And they pressed sore on the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

Gen 19:24–25 Then Jehovah rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew on the ground.

From these passages, it is not difficult to see that Sodom's wickedness and corruption had already reached a degree detestable to both man and God, and that in the eyes of God the city therefore deserved to be destroyed. But what happened inside the city before it was destroyed? What inspiration can people draw from these events? What does God's attitude toward these events show people about His disposition? In order to understand the whole story, let us carefully read what was recorded in the Scripture ...

Sodom's Corruption: Infuriating to Man, Enraging to God

On that night, Lot received two messengers from God and prepared a feast for them. After dining, before they had lain down, people from all over the city surrounded Lot's residence and called out to him. The Scripture records them as saying, "Where are the men which came in to you this night? bring them out to us, that we may know them." Who said these words? To whom were they spoken? These were the words of the people of Sodom, yelled outside Lot's residence and meant for Lot to hear. How does it feel to hear these words? Are you furious? Do these words sicken you? Are you simmering with rage? Do these words not reek of Satan? Through them, can you sense the evil and darkness in this city? Can you sense the brutality and barbarity of these people's behavior through their words? Can you sense the depth of their corruption through their behavior? Through the content of their speech, it is not difficult to see that their wicked nature and savage disposition had reached a level beyond their own control. Save for Lot, every last person in this city was no different from Satan; the mere sight of another person made these people want to harm and devour them.... These things not only give one a sense of the city's ghastly and terrifying nature, as well as the aura of death around it, but they also give one a sense of its wickedness and bloodiness.

As he found himself face-to-face with a gang of inhuman thugs, people who were filled with the wild desire to devour human souls, how did Lot respond? According to the

Scripture: "I pray you, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out to you, and do you to them as is good in your eyes: only to these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof." What Lot meant by these words was this: He was willing to give up his two daughters in order to protect the messengers. By any reasonable calculation, these people should have agreed to Lot's conditions and left the two messengers alone; after all, the messengers were perfect strangers to them, people who had absolutely nothing to do with them and had never harmed their interests. However, motivated by their wicked nature, they did not let the matter rest, but rather intensified their efforts. Here, another one of their exchanges can undoubtedly give people further insight into these people's true, vicious nature, while at the same time it also enables people to comprehend and understand the reason why God wished to destroy this city.

So what did they say next? As the Bible reads: "Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with you, than with them. And they pressed sore on the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door." Why did they want to break down Lot's door? The reason is that they were anxious to inflict harm on those two messengers. What brought these messengers to Sodom? Their purpose in coming there was to save Lot and his family, but the people of the city mistakenly thought that they had come to assume official posts. Without asking the messengers' purpose, the people of the city based their desire to savagely harm these two messengers purely on conjecture; they wished to harm two people who had nothing whatsoever to do with them. It is clear that the people of this city had utterly lost their humanity and reason. The degree of their insanity and wildness was already no different from Satan's vicious nature by which it harms and devours men.

When they demanded that Lot hand over these people, what did Lot do? From the text we know that Lot did not hand them over. Did Lot know these two messengers of God? Of course not! Yet why was he able to save these two people? Did he know what they had come to do? Although he was unaware of their reason for coming, he did know that they were God's servants, and so he took them into his house. That he could call these servants of God by the title "lord" shows that Lot was a habitual follower of God, unlike the other people of Sodom. Therefore, when God's messengers came to him, he risked his own life to take these two servants into his house; furthermore, he also offered up his two daughters in exchange in order to protect these two servants. This was Lot's righteous deed; it was a tangible expression of Lot's nature and essence, and it was also the reason God sent His servants to save Lot. When faced with peril, Lot protected these two servants without regard for anything else; he even attempted to trade his two daughters in exchange for the servants' safety. Other than Lot, was there anyone else inside the city who would have done something like this? As the facts prove—no, there was not! Therefore, it goes without saying that everyone inside Sodom, save for Lot, was a target for destruction, and rightly so—they deserved it.

Sodom Is Utterly Annihilated for Offending God's Wrath

When the people of Sodom saw these two servants, they did not ask their reason for coming, nor did anyone ask whether they had come to spread God's will. On the contrary, they formed a mob and, without waiting for an explanation, came like wild dogs or vicious wolves to seize these two servants. Did God watch these things as they happened? What was God thinking in His heart about this kind of human behavior, this kind of event? God made up His mind to destroy this city; He would not hesitate or wait, nor would He show any more patience. His day had come, and so He set about the work He wished to do. Thus, Genesis 19:24–25 says, "Then Jehovah rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew on the ground." These two verses tell of the method by which God destroyed this city as well as the things God destroyed. First, the Bible recounts that God burned the city with fire, and that the extent of this fire was enough to destroy all the people and all that which grew on the ground. That is to say, the fire, which fell from heaven, not only destroyed the city, it also destroyed all the people and living things inside it, until not a single trace remained. After the city was destroyed, the land was left bereft of living things; there was no more life, nor any signs of life at all. The city had become a wasteland, an empty place filled with deathly silence. There would be no more evil deeds committed against God in this place, no more slaughter or blood spilled.

Why did God want to burn this city so thoroughly? What can you see here? Could God really bear to watch mankind and nature, His own creations, be destroyed like this? If you can discern Jehovah God's anger from the fire that was cast down from heaven, then it is not difficult to see how great His rage was, judging by the targets of His destruction and the degree to which this city was annihilated. When God despises a city, He will deliver His punishment upon it. When God is disgusted with a city, He will issue repeated warnings to inform people of His anger. However, when God decides to put an end to and destroy a city—that is, when His wrath and majesty have been offended—He will deliver no further punishments or warnings. Instead, He will directly destroy it. He will make it utterly disappear. This is God's righteous disposition.

After Sodom's Repeated Hostility and Resistance Toward Him, God Utterly Eradicates It

Now that we have a general understanding of God's righteous disposition, we may return our attention to the city of Sodom—a place that God saw as a city of sin. By understanding the essence of this city, we can understand why God wanted to destroy it and why He destroyed it so completely. From this, we can come to know God's righteous disposition.

From a human perspective, Sodom was a city that could fully satisfy man's desire and man's evil. Alluring and bewitching, with music and dancing night after night, its prosperity drove men to fascination and madness. Its evil corroded people's hearts and bewitched them into depravity. This was a city where unclean and evil spirits ran amok; it brimmed with sin and murder and the air was thick with a bloody, putrid stench. It was a city that made people's blood run cold, a city from which one would shrink away in horror. No one in this city—neither man nor woman, young nor old—sought the true way; no one yearned for the light or longed to walk away from sin. They lived under Satan's control, beneath Satan's corruption and deceit. They had lost their humanity, they had lost their senses, and they had lost man's original goal of existence. They committed countless wicked deeds of resistance against God; they refused His guidance and opposed His will. It was their wicked deeds that carried these people, the city and every living thing inside it, step by step, down the path of destruction.

Although these two passages do not record all of the details regarding the extent of the corruption of the people of Sodom, instead recording their conduct toward God's two servants following the latter's arrival in the city, there is a simple fact that reveals the extent to which the people of Sodom were corrupt, evil and resisted God. With this, the true face and essence of the city's people are also exposed. These people not only refused to accept God's warnings, but they also did not fear His punishment. On the contrary, they scorned God's anger. They blindly resisted God. No matter what He did or how He did it, their vicious nature only intensified, and they repeatedly opposed God. The people of Sodom were hostile toward God's existence, His coming, His punishment, and even more so, His warnings. They were exceedingly arrogant. They devoured and harmed all people that could be devoured and harmed, and they treated God's servants no differently. In regard to all of the wicked deeds committed by the people of Sodom, harming God's servants was only the tip of the iceberg, and their wicked nature that was thus revealed actually amounted to no more than a drop in a vast sea. Therefore, God chose to destroy them with fire. God did not use a flood, nor did He use a hurricane, earthquake, tsunami or any other method to destroy the city. What did God's use of fire to destroy this city signify? It meant the city's total destruction; it meant that the city vanished entirely from the earth and from existence. Here, "destruction" not only refers to the vanishing of the city's form and structure or outer appearance; it also means that the souls of the people inside the city ceased to exist, having been utterly eradicated. Simply put, all people, events and things associated with the city were destroyed. There would be no next life or reincarnation for the people of that city; God had eradicated them from the humanity of His creation, for all eternity. The use of fire signified an end to sin in this place, and that sin had been curbed there; this sin would cease to exist and spread. It meant that Satan's evil had lost its nurturing soil as well as the graveyard that granted it a place to stay and to live. In the war between God and Satan, God's use of fire is the brand of His victory with which Satan is marked. Sodom's destruction is a great misstep in Satan's ambition to oppose God by corrupting and devouring men, and it is likewise a humiliating sign of a time in humanity's development when man rejected God's

guidance and abandoned himself to vice. Furthermore, it is a record of a true revelation of God's righteous disposition.

When the fire sent by God from heaven had reduced Sodom to nothing more than ashes, it meant that the city named "Sodom" thereafter ceased to exist, as did everything within the city. It was destroyed by God's anger, vanishing within God's wrath and majesty. Because of God's righteous disposition, Sodom received its just punishment and its rightful end. The end of Sodom's existence was due to its evil, and it was also due to God's desire to never again look upon this city or any of the people who had lived in it or any life that had grown within the city. God's "desire to never again look upon the city" is His wrath, as well as His majesty. God burned the city because its wickedness and sin caused Him to feel anger, disgust and loathing toward it and to wish never to see it or any of the people or living things inside it ever again. Once the city had finished burning, leaving only ashes behind, it had truly ceased to exist in God's eyes; even His memory of it was gone, erased. This means that the fire sent from heaven not only destroyed the entire city of Sodom, nor did it only destroy the people inside the city who were so filled with sin, nor did it only destroy all things inside the city that had been tainted by sin; beyond just these things, the fire also destroyed the memory of humanity's evil and resistance against God. This was God's purpose in burning the city down.

This humanity had become corrupt in the extreme. These people did not know who God was or where they themselves had come from. If you mentioned God to them, they would attack, slander, and blaspheme. Even when God's servants had come to spread His warning, these corrupt people not only showed no signs of repentance and did not abandon their wicked conduct, but on the contrary, they brazenly harmed God's servants. What they expressed and revealed was their nature and essence of extreme hostility toward God. We can see that these corrupt people's resistance against God was more than a revelation of their corrupt disposition, just as it was more than an instance of slandering or mocking which simply stemmed from a lack of understanding of the truth. Neither stupidity nor ignorance caused their wicked conduct; they acted in this way not because they had been deceived, and it was certainly not because they had been misled. Their conduct had reached the level of flagrantly brazen antagonism, opposition and clamoring against God. Without a doubt, this kind of human behavior would enrage God, and it would enrage His disposition—a disposition that must not be offended. Therefore, God directly and openly unleashed His wrath and His majesty; this was a true revelation of His righteous disposition. Faced with a city overflowing with sin, God desired to destroy it in the swiftest manner possible, to eradicate the people within it and the entirety of their sins in the most complete way, to make this city's people cease to exist and to stop the sin within this place from multiplying. The swiftest and most complete way of doing so was to burn it down with fire. God's attitude toward the people of Sodom was not one of abandonment or disregard. Rather, He used His wrath, majesty and authority to punish, strike down and utterly destroy these people. His attitude toward

them was one not only of physical destruction but also of destruction of the soul, an eternal eradication. This is the true implication of what God means by the words, "cease to exist."

Although God's Wrath Is Hidden and Unknown to Man, It Tolerates No Offense

God's treatment of the whole of humanity, foolish and ignorant as humanity is, is primarily based on mercy and tolerance. His wrath, on the other hand, is kept concealed for the vast majority of time and in the vast majority of events, and it is unknown to man. As a result, it is difficult for man to see God express His wrath, and it is also difficult to understand His wrath. As such, man makes light of God's wrath. When man faces God's final work and step of tolerance and forgiveness for man—that is, when God's final instance of mercy and His final warning comes upon mankind—if people still use the same methods to oppose God and do not make any effort to repent, to mend their ways and accept His mercy, then God will no longer bestow His tolerance and patience upon them. On the contrary, God will retract His mercy at this time. Following this, He will only send forth His wrath. He can express His wrath in different ways, just as He can use different methods to punish and destroy people.

God's use of fire to destroy the city of Sodom is His swiftest method of utterly annihilating a humanity or any other thing. Burning the people of Sodom destroyed more than their physical bodies; it destroyed the entirety of their spirits, their souls and their bodies, ensuring that the people inside the city would cease to exist in both the material world and the world that is invisible to man. This is one way in which God reveals and expresses His wrath. This manner of revelation and expression is one aspect of the essence of God's wrath, just as it is naturally also a revelation of the essence of God's righteous disposition. When God sends forth His wrath, He ceases to reveal any mercy or lovingkindness, nor does He display any more of His tolerance or patience; there is no person, thing or reason that can persuade Him to continue to be patient, to give His mercy again, to bestow His tolerance once more. In place of these things, without a moment's hesitation, God sends forth His wrath and majesty, doing what He desires. He will do these things in a swift and clean manner in accordance with His own wishes. This is the way in which God sends forth His wrath and majesty, which man must not offend, and it is also an expression of one aspect of His righteous disposition. When people witness God showing concern and love toward man, they are unable to detect His wrath, see His majesty or feel His intolerance toward offense. These things have always led people to believe that God's righteous disposition is one solely of mercy, tolerance and love. However, when one sees God destroy a city or detest a humanity, His rage in the destruction of man and His majesty allow people to glimpse the other side of His righteous disposition. This is God's intolerance to offense. God's disposition that tolerates no offense surpasses the imagination of any created being, and among the non-created beings, none is capable of interfering with it or affecting it; even less can it be impersonated or imitated. Thus, this aspect of God's disposition is the one that humanity should know the most. Only God Himself has this kind of disposition, and only God Himself is possessed of this kind of disposition. God is possessed of this kind of righteous disposition because He detests wickedness, darkness, rebelliousness and Satan's evil acts—corrupting and devouring mankind—because He detests all acts of sin in opposition to Him and because of His holy and undefiled essence. It is because of this that He will not suffer any of the created or non-created beings to openly oppose or contest Him. Even an individual to whom He had once shown mercy or whom He had chosen, need only provoke His disposition and transgress His principles of patience and tolerance, and God will unleash and reveal His righteous disposition that tolerates no offense without the least bit of mercy or hesitation.

God's Wrath Is a Safeguard for All the Forces of Justice and All Positive Things

By understanding these examples of God's speech, thoughts and actions, are you able to understand God's righteous disposition, a disposition that will not tolerate being offended by man? In short, regardless of how much man can understand of it, this is an aspect of the disposition of God Himself, and it is unique to Him. God's intolerance of offense is His unique essence; God's wrath is His unique disposition; God's majesty is His unique essence. The principle behind God's anger is the demonstration of His identity and status, which only He possesses. It goes without saying that this principle is also a symbol of the essence of the unique God Himself. God's disposition is His own inherent essence, which is not changed at all by the passage of time, and nor is it altered by changes of geographical location. His inherent disposition is His intrinsic essence. Regardless of whom He carries out His work upon, His essence does not change, and neither does His righteous disposition. When one angers God, that which God sends forth is His inherent disposition; at this time the principle behind His anger does not change, nor do His unique identity and status. He does not grow angry because of a change in His essence or because different elements arise from His disposition, but because man's opposition against Him offends His disposition. Man's flagrant provocation of God is a severe challenge to God's own identity and status. In God's view, when man challenges Him, man is contesting Him and testing His anger. When man opposes God, when man contests God, when man continuously tests God's anger—and it is at such times when sin runs rampant—God's wrath will naturally reveal and present itself. Therefore, God's expression of His wrath is a symbol that all evil forces will cease to exist, and it is a symbol that all hostile forces will be destroyed. This is the uniqueness of God's righteous disposition, and of God's wrath. When God's dignity and holiness are challenged, when the forces of justice are obstructed and unseen by man, then God will send forth His wrath. Because of God's essence, all those forces on earth which contest

God, oppose Him and contend with Him, are evil, corrupt and unjust; they come from and belong to Satan. Because God is just and is of the light and flawlessly holy, thus all things evil, corrupt and belonging to Satan will vanish when God's wrath is unleashed.

Although the outpouring of God's wrath is one aspect of the expression of His righteous disposition, God's anger is by no means indiscriminate regarding its target, and nor is it without principle. On the contrary, God is not at all quick to anger, and nor does He reveal His wrath and majesty lightly. Moreover, God's wrath is quite controlled and measured; it is not at all comparable to how man is wont to flare into a rage or vent his anger. Many conversations between man and God are recorded in the Bible. The words of some of the individual people involved in the conversations were shallow, ignorant and infantile, but God did not strike them down, and nor did He condemn them. In particular, during Job's trial, how did Jehovah God treat Job's three friends and the others after He heard the words that they spoke to Job? Did He condemn them? Did He rage at them? He did nothing of the sort! Instead He told Job to make entreaties on their behalf and to pray for them, and God Himself did not take their faults to heart. These instances all represent the primary attitude with which God treats humanity, corrupt and ignorant as it is. Therefore, the unleashing of God's wrath is by no means an expression of His mood, nor is it a way for Him to give vent to His feelings. Contrary to man's misunderstanding, God's wrath is not a complete outburst of rage. God does not unleash His wrath because He is unable to control His own mood or because His anger has reached its boiling point and must be vented. On the contrary, His wrath is a display and a genuine expression of His righteous disposition, and it is a symbolic revelation of His holy essence. God is wrath, and He does not tolerate being offended—this is not to say that God's anger does not distinguish among causes or is unprincipled; it is corrupt humanity that has an exclusive claim on unprincipled, random outbursts of rage, rage of a kind that does not distinguish between causes. Once a man has status, he will often find it difficult to control his mood, and so he will enjoy seizing upon opportunities to express his dissatisfaction and vent his emotions; he will often flare up in rage for no apparent reason, so as to reveal his ability and let others know that his status and identity are different from those of ordinary people. Of course, corrupt people without any status also often lose control. Their anger is frequently caused by damage to their private interests. In order to protect their own status and dignity, they will frequently vent their emotions and reveal their arrogant nature. Man will flare up in anger and vent his emotions in order to defend and uphold the existence of sin, and these actions are the ways in which man expresses his dissatisfaction; they brim with impurities, with schemes and intrigues, with man's corruption and evil, and more than anything else, they brim with man's wild ambitions and desires. When justice clashes with wickedness, man's anger will not flare up in the defense of the existence of justice or to uphold it; on the contrary, when the forces of justice are threatened, persecuted and attacked, man's attitude is one of overlooking, evading or flinching away. However, when facing the

forces of evil, man's attitude is one of accommodating, of bowing and scraping. Therefore, man's venting is an escape for evil forces, an expression of the rampant and unstoppable evil conduct of the fleshly man. When God sends forth His wrath, however, all evil forces will be stopped, all sins that harm man will be curbed, all hostile forces that obstruct God's work will be made apparent, separated and cursed, while all of Satan's accomplices who oppose God will be punished and rooted out. In their place, God's work will proceed free of any obstacles, God's management plan will continue to develop step by step according to schedule, and God's chosen people will be free of Satan's disturbance and deceit, while those who follow God will enjoy God's leadership and provision among tranquil and peaceful surroundings. God's wrath is a safeguard preventing all evil forces from multiplying and running rampant, and it is also a safeguard that protects the existence and propagation of all things that are just and positive, and eternally guards them from suppression and subversion.

Can you see the essence of God's wrath in His destruction of Sodom? Is there anything else mingled within His rage? Is God's rage pure? To use the words of man, is God's wrath unadulterated? Is there any deception behind His wrath? Is there any conspiracy? Are there any unspeakable secrets? I can tell you sternly and solemnly: There is no part of God's wrath that can lead one to doubt. His anger is a pure, unadulterated anger that harbors no other intentions or goals. The reasons behind His anger are pure, blameless and above criticism. It is a natural revelation and display of His holy essence; it is something that nothing in all of creation possesses. This is a part of God's unique righteous disposition, and it is also a striking difference between the respective essences of the Creator and His creation.

Regardless of whether one becomes angry in the sight of others or behind their backs, everyone has a different intention and purpose to their anger. Perhaps they are building up their prestige, or maybe they are defending their own interests, maintaining their image or keeping face. Some exercise restraint in their anger, while others are more rash and allow their rage to flare up whenever they wish without the least bit of restraint. In short, man's anger derives from his corrupt disposition. No matter what its purpose, it is of the flesh and of nature; it has nothing to do with justice or injustice because nothing in man's nature and essence corresponds to the truth. Therefore, corrupt humanity's temper and God's wrath should not be mentioned in the same breath. Without exception, the behavior of a man corrupted by Satan begins with the desire to safeguard corruption, and indeed it is based on corruption; this is why man's anger cannot be mentioned in the same breath as God's wrath, no matter how proper a man's anger may seem in theory. When God sends forth His rage, evil forces are checked and evil things are destroyed, while just and positive things come to enjoy God's care and protection and are allowed to continue. God sends forth His wrath because unjust, negative and evil things obstruct, disturb or destroy the normal activity and development of just and positive things. The goal of God's anger is not to safeguard His own status and identity, but to safeguard the

existence of just, positive, beautiful and good things, to safeguard the laws and order of humanity's normal survival. This is the root cause of God's wrath. God's rage is a very proper, natural and true revelation of His disposition. There are no ulterior motives in His rage, and nor is there deceit or plotting, let alone the desires, craftiness, malice, violence, evil or any of corrupt humanity's other shared traits. Before God sends forth His rage, He has already perceived the essence of every matter quite clearly and completely, and He has already formulated accurate, clear definitions and conclusions. Thus, God's objective in everything He does is crystal-clear, as is His attitude. He is not muddleheaded, blind, impulsive, or careless, and He is certainly not unprincipled. This is the practical aspect of God's wrath, and it is because of this practical aspect of God's wrath that humanity has attained its normal existence. Without God's wrath, humanity would descend into abnormal living conditions and all things just, beautiful and good would be destroyed and cease to exist. Without God's wrath, the laws and rules of existence for created beings would be broken or even utterly subverted. Since the creation of man, God has continuously used His righteous disposition to safeguard and sustain humanity's normal existence. Because His righteous disposition contains wrath and majesty, all evil people, things and objects, and all things that disturb and damage humanity's normal existence, are punished, controlled and destroyed as a result of His wrath. Over the past several millennia, God has continuously used His righteous disposition to strike down and destroy all kinds of unclean and evil spirits which oppose God and act as Satan's accomplices and lackeys in God's work of managing humanity. Thus, God's work of the salvation of man has always advanced according to His plan. This is to say that because of the existence of God's wrath, the most righteous causes of men have never been destroyed.

Now that you have an understanding of the essence of God's wrath, you must certainly have an even better understanding of how to distinguish Satan's evil!

Although Satan Appears Humane, Just and Virtuous, Satan's Essence Is Cruel and Evil

Satan builds its reputation through deceiving people, and often establishes itself as a vanguard and role model of righteousness. Under false pretenses of safeguarding righteousness, it harms people, devours their souls, and uses all sorts of means to benumb, deceive and incite man. Its goal is to make man approve of and go along with its evil conduct, to make man join it in opposing God's authority and sovereignty. However, when one sees through its schemes and plots and sees through to its vile features, and when one does not wish to continue to be trampled upon and fooled by it or to continue slaving away for it, or to be punished and destroyed alongside it, then Satan changes its previously saintly features and tears off its false mask to reveal its true face, which is evil, vicious, ugly and savage. It would love nothing more than to exterminate all those who refuse to follow it and who oppose its evil forces. At this point

Satan can no longer assume a trustworthy, gentlemanly appearance; instead, its true ugly and devilish features are revealed under sheep's clothing. Once Satan's schemes are brought to light and its true features exposed, it will fly into a rage and expose its barbarity. After this, its desire to harm and devour people will only be intensified. This is because it is enraged when man awakens to the truth, and it develops a powerful vindictiveness toward man for their aspiration to yearn for freedom and light and to break free of its prison. Its rage is intended to defend and uphold its evil, and it is also a true revelation of its savage nature.

In every matter, Satan's behavior exposes its evil nature. Out of all the evil acts that Satan has carried out upon man—from its early efforts to delude man into following it, to its exploitation of man, in which it drags man into its evil deeds, to its vindictiveness toward man after its true features have been exposed and man has recognized and forsaken it—not one of these acts fails to expose Satan's evil essence, nor to prove the fact that Satan has no relation to positive things and that Satan is the source of all evil things. Every single one of its actions safeguards its evil, maintains the continuation of its evil acts, goes against just and positive things, and ruins the laws and order of humanity's normal existence. These acts of Satan are hostile to God, and they will be destroyed by God's wrath. Although Satan has its own rage, its rage is just a means of venting its evil nature. The reason why Satan is exasperated and furious is this: Its unspeakable schemes have been exposed; its plots are not easily gotten away with; its wild ambition and desire to replace God and act as God have been struck down and blocked; and its goal of controlling all of humanity has now come to nothing and can never be achieved. What has stopped Satan's plots from coming to fruition and cut short the spread and rampancy of Satan's evil is God's repeated summoning of His wrath, time after time. For this reason, Satan both hates and fears God's wrath. Each time God's wrath descends, it not only unmasks Satan's true vile appearance, but also exposes Satan's evil desires to the light, and in the process, the reasons for Satan's rage against humanity are laid bare. The eruption of Satan's rage is a true revelation of its evil nature and an exposure of its schemes. Of course, each time that Satan is enraged heralds the destruction of evil things and the protection and continuation of positive things; it heralds the truth that God's wrath cannot be offended!

One Must Not Rely on Experience and Imagination to Know God's Righteous Disposition

When you find yourself facing God's judgment and chastisement, will you say that God's word is adulterated? Will you say that there is a story behind God's rage, and that it is adulterated? Will you slander God, saying that His disposition is not necessarily entirely righteous? When dealing with each of God's acts, you must first be certain that God's righteous disposition is free of any other elements, that it is holy and flawless. These acts include God's striking down, punishment and destruction of humanity.

Without exception, every one of God's acts is made in strict accordance with His inherent disposition and His plan, and includes no part of humanity's knowledge, tradition and philosophy. Every one of God's acts is an expression of His disposition and essence, unrelated to anything that belongs to corrupt humanity. Mankind has the notion that only God's love, mercy and tolerance toward humanity are flawless, unadulterated and holy, and no one knows that God's rage and His wrath are likewise unadulterated; furthermore, no one has contemplated questions such as why God tolerates no offense or why His rage is so great. On the contrary, some mistake God's wrath for a bad temper, such as that of corrupt humanity, and misunderstand God's anger to be the same rage as that of corrupt humanity. They even mistakenly assume that God's rage is just like the natural revelation of humanity's corrupt disposition and that the issuing of God's wrath is just like the anger of corrupt people when they are faced with some unhappy situation, and believe that the issuing of God's wrath is an expression of His mood. After this fellowship, I hope that every one of you will no longer have any misconceptions, imaginings or speculation regarding God's righteous disposition. I hope that after hearing My words you can have a true recognition in your hearts of the wrath of God's righteous disposition, that you can put aside any previous mistaken understandings of God's wrath, and that you can change your own mistaken beliefs and views of the essence of God's wrath. Furthermore, I hope that you can have an accurate definition of God's disposition in your hearts, that you will no longer have any doubts as to God's righteous disposition, and that you will not impose any human reasoning or imagining onto God's true disposition. God's righteous disposition is God's own true essence. It is not something written or shaped by man. His righteous disposition is His righteous disposition and has no relation or connection to anything of creation. God Himself is God Himself. He will never become a part of creation, and even if He becomes a member of the created beings, His inherent disposition and essence will not change. Therefore, knowing God is not the same as knowing an object; to know God is not to dissect something, nor is it the same as understanding a person. If man uses his concept or method of knowing an object or understanding a person to know God, then you will never be able to attain knowledge of God. Knowing God is not reliant on experience or imagination, and therefore you must never impose your experience or imagination on God; no matter how rich your experience and imagination may be, they are still limited. What is more, your imagination does not correspond to facts, and much less to the truth, and it is incompatible with God's true disposition and essence. You will never succeed if you rely on your imagination to understand God's essence. The only path is this: Accept all that comes from God, then gradually experience and understand it. There will be a day when God will enlighten you to truly understand and know Him because of your cooperation and because of your hunger and thirst for the truth. And with this, let us conclude this portion of our conversation.

Humanity Wins God's Mercy and Tolerance Through Sincere Repentance

What follows is the biblical story of "God's salvation of Nineveh."

Jon 1:1–2 Now the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me.

Jon 3 And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the preaching that I bid you. So Jonah arose, and went to Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God: yes, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do to them; and He did it not.

Jon 4 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed to Jehovah, and said, I pray You, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before to Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repent You of the evil. Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said Jehovah, Do you well to be angry? So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Do you well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even to death. Then said Jehovah, You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Synopsis of the Story of Nineveh

Although the story of "God's salvation of Nineveh" is brief in length, it allows one to

glimpse the other side of God's righteous disposition. In order to understand exactly what that side consists of, we must return to the Scripture and review one of God's acts which He carried out in the process of His work.

Let us first look at the beginning of this story: "Now the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me" (Jon 1:1–2). In this passage from the scriptures, we know that Jehovah God commanded Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh. Why did He order Jonah to go to this city? The Bible is very clear about this: The wickedness of the people inside this city had come before Jehovah God, and therefore He sent Jonah to proclaim to them what He intended to do. While there is nothing recorded telling us who Jonah was, this is, of course, unrelated to knowing God, and you therefore need not understand this man, Jonah. You need only know what God ordered Jonah to do and what God's reasons were for doing such a thing.

Jehovah God's Warning Reaches the Ninevites

Let us move on to the second passage, the third chapter of the Book of Jonah: "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." These are the words that God directly passed on to Jonah to tell the Ninevites, so of course, these are the words that Jehovah wished to say to the Ninevites. These words tell people that God began to abhor and hate the people of the city because their wickedness had come before His gaze, and so He wished to destroy this city. However, before God destroyed the city, He would make an announcement to the Ninevites, and at the same time, give them an opportunity to repent of their wickedness and start anew. This opportunity would last forty days, and no longer. In other words, if the people inside the city did not repent, admit their sins and prostrate themselves before Jehovah God within forty days, God would destroy the city as He had destroyed Sodom. This was what Jehovah God wished to tell the people of Nineveh. Clearly, this was no simple declaration. Not only did it convey Jehovah God's anger, it also conveyed His attitude toward the Ninevites, while at the same time serving as a solemn warning to the people living inside the city. This warning told them that their wicked acts had earned them Jehovah God's hatred and would soon bring them to the brink of their own annihilation. The life of every inhabitant of Nineveh was therefore in imminent peril.

The Stark Contrast Between Nineveh and Sodom's Reaction to Jehovah God's Warning

What does it mean to be overthrown? In colloquial terms, it means to no longer exist. But in what way? Who could overthrow an entire city? It would be impossible for man to perform such an act, of course. The people of Nineveh were no fools; as soon as they heard this proclamation, they got the idea. They knew that the proclamation

had come from God, they knew that God was going to perform His work, and they knew that their wickedness had enraged Jehovah God and brought His anger down upon them, so that they would soon be destroyed along with their city. How did the people of the city behave after hearing Jehovah God's warning? The Bible describes in specific detail how the people reacted, from the king down to the commoners. The following words were recorded in the Scriptures: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God: yes, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands..." (Jon 3:5–9).

After hearing Jehovah God's proclamation, the people of Nineveh displayed an attitude utterly opposite to that of the people of Sodom—whereas the people of Sodom openly opposed God, proceeding from evil to evil, the Ninevites, after hearing these words, did not ignore the matter, and nor did they resist. Instead, they believed God and declared a fast. What does the word, "believed," mean here? The word itself suggests faith and submission. If we use the Ninevites' actual behavior to explain this word, it means that they believed God could and would do as He said, and that they were willing to repent. Did the people of Nineveh feel fear in the face of imminent disaster? It was their belief that put fear in their hearts. So, what can we use to prove the Ninevites' belief and fear? It is as the Bible says: "... proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." This is to say that the Ninevites truly believed, and that from this belief came fear, which then led them to fast and don sackcloth. This is how they showed that they were beginning to repent. In utter contrast to the people of Sodom, not only did the Ninevites not oppose God, but they also clearly showed their repentance through their behavior and actions. Of course, this was something all the people of Nineveh did, not just the commoners—the king was no exception.

The Repentance of Nineveh's King Wins Jehovah God's Commendation

When the king of Nineveh heard this news, he arose from his throne, took off his robe, dressed himself in sackcloth and sat in ashes. He then proclaimed that no one in the city would be allowed to taste anything, and that no sheep, oxen or any other livestock would be allowed to graze or drink water. Man and livestock alike were to don sackcloth, and the people were to make earnest entreaties to God. The king also proclaimed that every one of them would turn away from their evil ways and forsake the violence in their hands. Judging from this series of actions, the king of Nineveh had true repentance in his heart. This series of actions he took—arising from his throne, casting

off his king's robe, wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes—tells people that the king of Nineveh was laying aside his royal status and donning sackcloth alongside the common people. This is to say that the king of Nineveh did not occupy his royal post to continue his evil way or the violence in his hands after hearing the announcement from Jehovah God; rather, he laid aside the authority he held and repented before Jehovah God. At this moment the king of Nineveh was not repenting as a king; he had come before God to repent and confess his sins as an ordinary subject of God. Moreover, he also told the entire city to repent and confess their sins before Jehovah God in the same manner as he had; additionally, he had a specific plan for how to do so, as seen in the scriptures: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: ... and cry mightily to God: yes, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." As the city's ruler, the king of Nineveh possessed supreme status and power, and could do anything he wished to. When faced with Jehovah God's announcement, he could have ignored the matter or simply repented and confessed his sins alone; as for whether or not the people in the city chose to repent, he could have completely ignored the matter. However, the king of Nineveh did not do this at all. Not only did he arise from his throne, wear sackcloth and ashes and repent and confess his sins before Jehovah God, but he also ordered all people and livestock within the city to do the same. He even ordered the people to "cry mightily to God." Through this series of actions, the king of Nineveh truly accomplished that which a ruler should. His series of actions is one that was difficult for any king in human history to achieve, and indeed, no other king achieved these things. These actions can be called unprecedented in human history, and they are worthy of being both commemorated and imitated by mankind. Since the dawn of man, every king had led his subjects to resist and oppose God. No one had ever led his subjects to entreat God to seek redemption for their wickedness, receive Jehovah God's pardon and avoid imminent punishment. The king of Nineveh, however, was able to lead his subjects to turn to God, to leave their respective evil ways behind and abandon the violence in their hands. Furthermore, he was also able to put aside his throne, and in return, Jehovah God had a change of mind and felt regret, retracting His wrath and allowing the people of the city to survive, keeping them from destruction. The king's actions can only be called a rare miracle in human history, and even a model example of corrupt humanity repenting and confessing their sins before God.

God Sees the Sincere Repentance Deep in the Ninevites' Hearts

After hearing God's declaration, the king of Nineveh and his subjects performed a series of actions. What was the nature of these actions and of their behavior? In other words, what was the essence of their conduct in its entirety? Why did they do what they did? In God's eyes they had sincerely repented, not only because they had made earnest entreaties to God and confessed their sins before Him, but also because they had

abandoned their wicked conduct. They acted in this way because after hearing God's words, they were incredibly frightened and believed that He would do as He said. By fasting, wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes, they wished to express their willingness to reform their ways and refrain from wickedness, and they prayed to Jehovah God to restrain His anger, entreating Him to withdraw His decision and the catastrophe bearing down upon them. If we examine all of their behavior, we can see that they already understood that their previous wicked acts were detestable to Jehovah God, and we can see too that they understood the reason why He would soon destroy them. This is why they all wished to make a full repentance, to turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. In other words, once they became aware of Jehovah God's declaration, each and every one of them felt fear in their hearts; they discontinued their wicked conduct and no longer committed those acts that were so detestable to Jehovah God. Additionally, they entreated Jehovah God to forgive their past sins and to not treat them according to their past actions. They were willing to never again engage in wickedness and to act according to Jehovah God's instructions, if only it were possible to never again infuriate Jehovah God. Their repentance was sincere and thorough. It came from deep within their hearts and was unfeigned and intransient.

Once all of the people of Nineveh, from the king to the commoners, learned that Jehovah God was angry with them, God could clearly and plainly see every single one of their subsequent actions and their conduct in its entirety, as well as every one of the decisions and choices that they made. God's heart changed according to their behavior. What was God's frame of mind at that very moment? The Bible can answer that question for you. The following words were recorded in the scriptures: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do to them; and He did it not" (Jon 3:10). Although God changed His mind, there was nothing complicated about His frame of mind. He simply went from expressing His anger to calming His anger, and then decided not to bring catastrophe upon the city of Nineveh. The reason why God's decision—to spare the Ninevites from catastrophe was so swift is that God observed the heart of every person of Nineveh. He saw what they held deep within their hearts: their sincere repentance and confession for their sins, their sincere belief in Him, their deep sense of how their wicked acts had enraged His disposition, and the resulting fear of Jehovah God's impending punishment. At the same time, Jehovah God also heard their prayers, which came from deep within their hearts, entreating Him to no longer be angry at them, so that they might avoid this catastrophe. When God observed all these facts, little by little His anger faded away. Regardless of how great His anger had previously been, His heart was touched when He saw the sincere repentance deep within these people's hearts, and so He could not bear to bring catastrophe upon them, and He ceased to be angry at them. Instead, He continued to extend His mercy and tolerance toward them and continued to guide and provide for them.

If Your Belief in God Is True, You Will Receive His Care Often

God's changing of His intentions toward the people of Nineveh involved no hesitation or anything that was ambiguous or vague. Rather, it was a transformation from pure anger to pure tolerance. This is a true revelation of God's essence. God is never irresolute or hesitant in His actions; the principles and purposes behind His actions are all clear and transparent, pure and flawless, with absolutely no ruses or schemes intermingled within. In other words, God's essence contains no darkness or evil. God became angry with the Ninevites because their wicked acts had come before His gaze; at that time His anger was derived from His essence. However, when God's anger dissipated and He bestowed His tolerance upon the people of Nineveh once more, everything that He revealed was still His own essence. The entirety of this change was due to a change in man's attitude toward God. During this entire period of time, God's unoffendable disposition did not change, God's tolerant essence did not change, and God's loving and merciful essence did not change. When people commit wicked acts and offend God, He will bring His anger upon them. When people truly repent, God's heart will change, and His anger will cease. When people continue to stubbornly oppose God, His rage will be unceasing, and His wrath will press in on them bit by bit until they are destroyed. This is the essence of God's disposition. Regardless of whether God is expressing wrath or mercy and lovingkindness, it is man's conduct, behavior, and the attitude man holds toward God deep within his heart that dictate that which is expressed through the revelation of God's disposition. If God continuously subjects one person to His anger, this person's heart doubtlessly opposes God. Because this person has never truly repented, bowed their head before God or possessed true belief in God, they have never obtained God's mercy and tolerance. If someone often receives God's care, His mercy, and His tolerance, then without a doubt this person has true belief in God in their heart, and their heart is not opposed to God. This person often truly repents before God; therefore, even if God's discipline often descends upon this person, His wrath will not.

This brief account allows people to see God's heart, to see the realness of His essence, to see that God's anger and the changes in His heart are not without cause. Despite the stark contrast that God demonstrated when He was wrathful and when He changed His heart, which makes people believe there is a large disconnect or contrast between these two aspects of God's essence—His anger and His tolerance—God's attitude toward the repentance of the Ninevites once again allows people to see another side of God's true disposition. God's change of heart truly allows humanity to once again see the truth of God's mercy and lovingkindness, and to see the true revelation of God's essence. Humanity has but to acknowledge that God's mercy and lovingkindness are not myths, nor are they fabrications. This is because God's feeling at that moment was true, and God's change of heart was true—God indeed bestowed His mercy and tolerance upon humanity once more.

The True Repentance in the Ninevites' Hearts Wins Them God's Mercy and Changes Their Own Outcomes

Was there any contradiction between God's change of heart and His wrath? Of course not! This is because God's tolerance at that particular time had its reason. What reason might this be? It is the one given in the Bible: "Every person turned away from their evil way" and "abandoned the violence in their hands."

This "evil way" does not refer to a handful of evil acts, but to the evil source from which people's behavior springs. "Turning away from one's evil way" means that those in question will never commit these actions again. In other words, they will never again behave in this evil way; the method, source, purpose, intent and principle of their actions have all changed; they will never again use those methods and principles to bring enjoyment and happiness to their hearts. The "abandon" in "abandon the violence in one's hands" means to lay down or to cast aside, to fully break with the past and to never turn back. When the people of Nineveh abandoned the violence in their hands, this proved and represented their true repentance. God observes people's outward appearances as well as their hearts. When God observed the true repentance in the hearts of the Ninevites without question and also observed that they had left their evil ways and abandoned the violence in their hands, He changed His heart. This is to say that these people's conduct and behavior and various ways of doing things, as well as their true confession and repentance of sins in their hearts, caused God to change His heart, to change His intentions, to retract His decision and not to punish or destroy them. Thus, the people of Nineveh achieved a different outcome for themselves. They redeemed their own lives and at the same time won God's mercy and tolerance, at which point God also retracted His wrath.

God's Mercy and Tolerance Are Not Rare—Man's True Repentance Is

Regardless of how angry God had been with the Ninevites, as soon as they declared a fast and donned sackcloth and ashes, His heart began to soften and He began to change His mind. When He proclaimed to them that He would destroy their city—the moment prior to their confession and repentance for their sins—God was still angry with them. Once they had carried out a series of repentant acts, God's anger for the people of Nineveh gradually transformed into mercy and tolerance for them. There is nothing contradictory about the coinciding revelation of these two aspects of God's disposition in the same event. So, how should one understand and know this lack of contradiction? God expressed and revealed each of these two polar-opposite essences in turn as the people of Nineveh repented, allowing people to see the realness and the unoffendableness of God's essence. God used His attitude to tell people the following: It is not that God does not tolerate people, or that He does not want to show mercy to them; rather, it is that they rarely truly repent to God, and it is rare that people truly turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. In other words, when

God is angry with man, He hopes that man will be able to truly repent, and indeed He hopes to see man's true repentance, in which case He will then liberally continue to bestow His mercy and tolerance upon man. This is to say that man's evil conduct incurs God's wrath, whereas God's mercy and tolerance are bestowed upon those who listen to God and truly repent before Him, upon those who can turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. God's attitude was very clearly revealed in His treatment of the Ninevites: God's mercy and tolerance are not at all difficult to obtain, and what He requires is one's true repentance. As long as people turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands, God will change His heart and His attitude toward them.

The Creator's Righteous Disposition Is Real and Vivid

When God had a change of heart toward the people of Nineveh, were His mercy and tolerance a false front? Of course not! Then what has been shown by the transition between these two aspects of God's disposition in the course of God dealing with this one situation? God's disposition is a complete whole—it is not at all divided. Regardless of whether He is expressing anger or mercy and tolerance toward people, these are all expressions of His righteous disposition. God's disposition is vital and vividly apparent, and He changes His thoughts and attitudes according to the way things develop. The transformation of His attitude toward the Ninevites tells humanity that He has His own thoughts and ideas; He is not a robot or a clay figure, but the living God Himself. He could be angry with the people of Nineveh, just as He could forgive their pasts because of their attitudes. He could decide to bring misfortune upon the Ninevites, and He could also change His decision because of their repentance. People like to rigidly apply rules, and to use such rules to delimit and define God, just as they like to use formulas to attempt to understand God's disposition. Therefore, as far as the domain of human thought is concerned, God does not think, nor does He have any essential ideas. But in reality, God's thoughts are in a state of constant transformation according to changes in things and in environments. While these thoughts are transforming, different aspects of God's essence are revealed. During this process of transformation, at the precise moment when God has a change of heart, what He shows to mankind is the real existence of His life, and that His righteous disposition is full of dynamic vitality. At the same time, God uses His own true revelations to prove to mankind the truth of the existence of His wrath, His mercy, His lovingkindness, and His tolerance. His essence will be revealed at any time and any place in accordance with how things develop. He possesses a lion's wrath and a mother's mercy and tolerance. His righteous disposition allows no questioning, violation, change, or distortion by any person. Among all matters and all things, God's righteous disposition—that is, God's wrath and God's mercy—can be revealed at any time and any place. He gives vital expression to these aspects in every corner of all creation, and He implements them with vitality in every passing

moment. God's righteous disposition is not limited by time or space; in other words, God's righteous disposition is not mechanically expressed or revealed according to the constraints of time or space, but rather with perfect ease and in all times and places. When you see God have a change of heart and cease to express His wrath and refrain from destroying the city of Nineveh, can you say that God is only merciful and loving? Can you say that God's wrath consists of empty words? When God rages with fierce wrath and retracts His mercy, can you say that He feels no true love toward humanity? This fierce wrath is expressed by God in response to people's evil acts; His wrath is not flawed. God's heart is moved in response to people's repentance, and it is this repentance that brings about His change of heart. When He feels moved, when He has a change of heart, and when He shows His mercy and tolerance toward man, all of these are utterly without flaw; they are clean, pure, unblemished and unadulterated. God's tolerance is exactly that: tolerance, just as His mercy is nothing other than mercy. His disposition reveals wrath or mercy and tolerance in accordance with man's repentance and the variations in man's conduct. No matter what He reveals and expresses, it is all pure and direct; its essence is distinct from that of anything in creation. When God expresses the principles underlying His actions, they are free from any flaws or blemishes, and so are His thoughts, His ideas, and every single decision He makes and every single action He takes. Since God has thus decided and since He has thus acted, so does He complete His undertakings. The results of His undertakings are correct and faultless precisely because their source is flawless and unblemished. God's wrath is flawless. Likewise, God's mercy and tolerance—which are possessed by none among all of creation—are holy and flawless, and can withstand thoughtful deliberation and experience.

Through your understanding of the story of Nineveh, do you now see the other side of the essence of God's righteous disposition? Do you see the other side of God's unique righteous disposition? Does anyone among humanity possess this kind of disposition? Does anyone possess this kind of wrath, the wrath of God? Does anyone possess mercy and tolerance such as that which is possessed by God? Who among creation can summon forth such great wrath and decide to destroy or bring disaster upon mankind? And who is qualified to bestow mercy on man, to tolerate and pardon, and thereby change one's prior decision to destroy man? The Creator expresses His righteous disposition through His own unique methods and principles, and He is not subject to the control or restrictions imposed by any people, events or things. With His unique disposition, no one is able to change His thoughts and ideas, nor is anyone able to persuade Him and change any of His decisions. The entirety of the behavior and thoughts that exist in all of creation exist under the judgment of His righteous disposition. No one can control whether He exercises wrath or mercy; only the essence of the Creator—or in other words, the Creator's righteous disposition—can decide this. Such is the unique nature of the Creator's righteous disposition!

Through analyzing and understanding the transformation of God's attitude toward the people of Nineveh, are you able to use the word "unique" to describe the mercy found within God's righteous disposition? We previously said that God's wrath is one aspect of the essence of His unique righteous disposition. Now I shall define two aspects—God's wrath and God's mercy—as His righteous disposition. God's righteous disposition is holy; it does not tolerate being offended or questioned; it is something possessed by none among created or non-created beings. It is both unique and exclusive to God. This is to say that God's wrath is holy and unoffendable. In the same way, the other aspect of God's righteous disposition—God's mercy—is holy and cannot be offended. None of the created or non-created beings can replace or represent God in His actions, nor could anyone have replaced or represented Him in the destruction of Sodom or the salvation of Nineveh. This is the true expression of God's unique righteous disposition.

The Creator's Sincere Feelings Toward Mankind

People often say that it is not an easy thing to know God. However, I say that knowing God is not a difficult matter at all, for God frequently displays His deeds for man to see. God has never ceased His dialogue with mankind, and He has never concealed Himself from man, and nor has He hidden Himself. His thoughts, His ideas, His words and His deeds are all revealed to mankind. Therefore, so long as man wishes to know God, he can come to understand and know Him through all sorts of means and methods. The reason why man blindly thinks that God has intentionally avoided him, that God has intentionally hidden Himself from humanity, that God has no intention of allowing man to understand and know Him, is because he does not know who God is and nor does he wish to understand God. Even more than that, man does not concern himself with the Creator's thoughts, words or deeds.... Truthfully speaking, if a person just uses their spare time to focus upon and understand the Creator's words or deeds, and if they pay just a little attention to the Creator's thoughts and the voice of His heart, it will not be difficult for that person to realize that the Creator's thoughts, words, and deeds are visible and transparent. Likewise, it will take little effort to realize that the Creator is among man at all times, that He is always in conversation with man and the entirety of creation, and that He is performing new deeds every day. His essence and disposition are expressed in His dialogue with man; His thoughts and ideas are revealed completely in His deeds; He accompanies and observes mankind at all times. He speaks quietly to mankind and all of creation with His silent words: "I am in the heavens, and I am amongst My creation." I am keeping watch; I am waiting; I am at your side...." His hands are warm and strong; His footsteps are light; His voice is soft and graceful; His form passes and turns, embracing all of mankind; His countenance is beautiful and gentle. He has never left, never vanished. Day and night, He is mankind's constant companion, never to leave their side. His devoted care and special affection for humanity, as well as His true concern and love for man, were displayed bit by bit as He saved the city of Nineveh. In particular, the exchange between Jehovah God and Jonah fully revealed the Creator's tenderness for the mankind He Himself created. Through those words, you can obtain a deep understanding of God's sincere feelings for humanity ...

The following passage was recorded in the Book of Jonah 4:10–11: "Then said Jehovah, You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" These are the actual words of Jehovah God, recorded from a conversation between God and Jonah. Though this exchange is brief, it brims with the Creator's care for mankind and His reluctance to give mankind up. These words express the true attitude and feelings that God holds within His heart for His creation. Through these words, which are clear and precise such as are rarely heard by man, God states His true intentions for humanity. This exchange represents an attitude God held toward the people of Nineveh—but what kind of attitude is it? It is the attitude He held toward the people of Nineveh before and after their repentance, and the attitude with which He treats mankind. Within these words are His thoughts and His disposition.

What thoughts of God are revealed in these words? If you pay attention to the details as you read, it will not be difficult for you to notice that He uses the word "pity"; the use of this word shows God's true attitude toward mankind.

On the level of literal meaning, people can interpret the word "pity" in different ways: First, it means "to love and protect, to feel tenderness toward something"; second, it means "to love dearly"; and finally, it means "to be unwilling to hurt something and to be unable to bear doing so." In short, this word implies tender affection and love, as well as an unwillingness to give up someone or something; it implies God's mercy and tolerance toward man. God used this word, which is a word commonly spoken by men, and yet it is also able to lay bare the voice of God's heart and His attitude toward mankind.

Although the city of Nineveh was filled with people just as corrupt, evil and violent as those of Sodom, their repentance caused God to have a change of heart and decide not to destroy them. Because the way they treated God's words and instructions demonstrated an attitude that starkly contrasted with that of the citizens of Sodom, and because of their honest submission to God and honest repentance for their sins, as well as their true and heartfelt behavior in all regards, God once more expressed His own heartfelt pity and bestowed it upon them. What God bestows upon humanity and His pity for humanity are impossible for anyone to duplicate, and it is impossible for any person to possess God's mercy, His tolerance, or His sincere feelings toward humanity. Is there anyone whom you deem a great man or woman, or even a superhuman, who would, from a high point, speaking as a great man or woman, or upon the highest point, make this kind of statement to mankind or to creation? Who amongst mankind can know the state of human life like the palm of their hands? Who can bear the burden and

responsibility for humanity's existence? Who is qualified to proclaim the destruction of a city? And who is qualified to pardon a city? Who can say that they have pity on their own creation? Only the Creator! Only the Creator has tenderness toward this mankind. Only the Creator shows this mankind compassion and affection. Only the Creator holds a true, unbreakable affection for this mankind. Likewise, only the Creator can bestow mercy on this mankind and pity all of His creation. His heart leaps and aches at every one of man's actions: He is angered, distressed and grieved over man's evil and corruption; He is pleased, joyful, forgiving and jubilant for man's repentance and belief; every single one of His thoughts and ideas exists for and revolves around mankind; what He is and has is expressed entirely for mankind's sake; the entirety of His emotions are intertwined with mankind's existence. For mankind's sake, He travels and rushes about; He silently gives forth every bit of His life; He dedicates every minute and second of His life.... He has never known how to cherish His own life, yet He has always pitied the mankind He Himself created.... He gives all that He has to this humanity.... He grants His mercy and tolerance unconditionally and without expectation of recompense. He does this only so that mankind can continue to survive before His eyes, receiving His provision of life. He does this only so that mankind may one day submit before Him and recognize that He is the One who nourishes man's existence and supplies the life of all creation.

The Creator Expresses His True Feelings for Humanity

This conversation between Jehovah God and Jonah is without a doubt an expression of the Creator's true feelings for humanity. On one hand it informs people of the Creator's understanding of all creation under His sovereignty; as Jehovah God said, "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" In other words, God's understanding of Nineveh was far from cursory. He not only knew the number of living things within the city (including people and livestock), but He also knew how many could not discern between their right and left hands—that is, how many children and youths were present. This is concrete proof of God's comprehensive understanding of mankind. On the other hand, this conversation informs people of the Creator's attitude toward humanity, which is to say, the weight of humanity in the Creator's heart. It is just as Jehovah God said: "You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city...?" These are Jehovah God's words of reproach toward Jonah, but they are all true.

Although Jonah was entrusted with proclaiming Jehovah God's words to the people of Nineveh, he did not understand Jehovah God's intentions, nor did he understand His worries and expectations for the people of the city. With this reprimand, God meant to tell him that humanity was the product of God's own hands, and that He had expended painstaking effort on each and every single person, that each and every person carried

God's expectations upon their shoulders, and that each and every person enjoyed the supply of God's life; for each and every person, God had paid the price of painstaking effort. This reprimand also told Jonah that God pitied humanity, which was the work of His own hands, just as much as Jonah himself had pity on the gourd. God would by no means abandon mankind lightly, or until the last possible moment, not least because there were so many children and innocent livestock inside the city. When dealing with these young and ignorant products of God's creation who could not even distinguish their right hands from their left, it was even less conceivable that God would end their lives and determine their outcomes in such a hasty manner. God hoped to see them grow up; He hoped that they would not walk the same paths as their elders, that they would not have to hear Jehovah God's warning again, and that they would bear witness to Nineveh's past. Even more so, God hoped to see Nineveh after it had repented, to see Nineveh's future following its repentance, and more importantly, to see Nineveh live under God's mercy once again. Therefore, in God's eyes, those objects of creation who could not distinguish between their right and left hands were Nineveh's future. They would shoulder Nineveh's despicable past, just as they would shoulder the important duty of bearing witness to both Nineveh's past and its future under Jehovah God's guidance. In this declaration of His true feelings, Jehovah God presented the Creator's mercy for humanity in its entirety. It showed to humanity that "the Creator's mercy" is not an empty phrase, nor is it a hollow promise; it has concrete principles, methods and objectives. God is true and real, and He uses no falsehoods or disguises, and in this same manner His mercy is endlessly bestowed upon humanity in every time and age. However, to this very day, the Creator's exchange with Jonah is His sole, exclusive verbal statement of why He shows mercy to humanity, how He shows mercy to humanity, how tolerant He is of humanity and His true feelings for humanity. Jehovah God's succinct words during this conversation express His thoughts toward humanity as an integral whole; they are a true expression of His heart's attitude toward humanity, and they are also concrete proof of His bestowal of abundant mercy upon humanity. His mercy is not only bestowed upon humanity's elder generations, but is also granted to the younger members of humanity, just as it has always been, from one generation to the next. Although God's wrath frequently comes down upon certain corners and certain eras of humanity, God's mercy has never ceased. With His mercy, He guides and leads one generation of His creation after the next, and supplies and nourishes one generation of creation after the next, because His true feelings toward humanity will never change. Just as Jehovah God said: "And should not I pity...?" He has always pitied His own creation. This is the mercy of the Creator's righteous disposition, and it is also the full uniqueness of the Creator!

Five Types of People

For the time being, I will leave our fellowship about God's righteous disposition here. Moving on, I will classify God's followers into several categories according to their understanding of God and their understanding and experience of His righteous disposition, so that you may know the stage you are in currently, as well as your current stature. In terms of people's knowledge of God and understanding of His righteous disposition, the different stages and statures which people occupy can generally be separated into five types. This topic is predicated on the basis of knowing the unique God and His righteous disposition. Therefore, as you read the following content, you should carefully attempt to figure out exactly how much understanding and knowledge you have regarding God's uniqueness and His righteous disposition, and then you should use the result to judge which stage you truly belong in, how large your stature truly is, and which type of person you truly are.

Type One: The Stage of the Infant Wrapped in Swaddling Clothes

What is meant by "an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes"? An infant wrapped in swaddling clothes is an infant who has just come into this world, a newborn. It is when people are at their most immature.

People in this stage essentially possess no awareness or consciousness about matters of belief in God. They are bewildered and ignorant about everything. These people may have believed in God for a long time or perhaps not a very long time at all, but their bewildered and ignorant state and their true stature place them within the stage of the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. The precise definition of the conditions of an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes is as such: No matter how long this kind of person has believed in God, they will always be muddle-headed, confused and simple-minded; they do not know why they believe in God, nor do they know who God is or who is God. Although they follow God, there is no exact definition of God in their heart, and they cannot determine whether the One they follow is God, let alone whether they truly should believe in God and follow Him. This is the true state of this type of person. These people's thoughts are clouded and, simply put, their belief is muddled. They always exist in a state of bewilderment and blankness; "muddle-headedness," "confusion," and "simplemindedness" summarize their state. They have never seen nor felt God's existence, and therefore, talking to them about knowing God is as much use as making them read a book written in hieroglyphics—they will neither understand nor accept it. For them, knowing God is the same as hearing a fantastical tale. While their thoughts may be clouded, they actually firmly believe that knowing God is an utter waste of time and effort. This is the first type of person: the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Type Two: The Stage of the Suckling Infant

Compared to an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, this type of person has made

some progress. Regrettably, they still have no understanding of God whatsoever. They still lack a clear understanding of God and insight into God, and they are not very clear as to why they should believe in God, yet in their hearts they have their own purpose and clear ideas. They do not concern themselves with whether it is right to believe in God. The objective and purpose they seek through belief in God is to enjoy His grace, to have joy and peace, to live comfortable lives, to enjoy God's care and protection, and to live under God's blessings. They are not concerned with the degree to which they know God; they have no urge to seek an understanding of God, and nor are they concerned with what God is doing or what He wishes to do. They only blindly seek to enjoy His grace and obtain more of His blessings; they seek to gain a hundredfold in the present age, and eternal life in the age to come. Their thoughts, how much they expend themselves, their devotion, as well as their suffering, all share the same objective: to obtain God's grace and blessings. They have no concern for anything else. This type of person is certain only that God can keep people safe and bestow His grace upon them. One can say that they are not interested in nor very clear about why God wishes to save man or the result God wishes to obtain with His words and work. They have never made any effort to know God's essence and righteous disposition, nor can they muster the interest to do so. They lack the inclination to pay attention to these things, and nor do they wish to know them. They do not wish to ask about God's work, God's requirements of man, God's will, or anything else related to God, and they too lack the inclination to ask about these things. This is because they believe these matters are unrelated to their enjoyment of God's grace, and they are only concerned with a God who exists in direct relation to their own interests, and who can bestow grace upon man. They have no interest whatsoever in anything else, and so they cannot enter the reality of the truth, regardless of how many years they have believed in God. Without anyone to frequently water or feed them, it is difficult for them to continue down the path of belief in God. If they cannot enjoy their previous joy and peace or God's grace, then they are guite liable to walk away. This is the second type of person: the person who exists in the stage of the suckling infant.

Type Three: The Stage of the Weaning Infant, or the Stage of the Young Child

This group of people possesses a certain amount of clear awareness. They are aware that enjoying God's grace does not mean that they themselves possess true experience, and they are aware that even if they never tire of seeking joy and peace, of seeking grace, or if they are able to bear witness by sharing their experiences of enjoying God's grace or by praising God for the blessings He has bestowed upon them, these things do not mean that they possess life, nor do they mean that they possess the reality of the truth. Beginning from their consciousness, they cease to entertain wild hopes that they will only be accompanied by God's grace; rather, as they enjoy God's grace, they

simultaneously wish to do something for God. They are willing to perform their duty, to endure a bit of hardship and fatigue, to engage in some degree of cooperation with God. However, because their pursuit in their belief in God is too adulterated, because the individual intentions and desires they harbor are too strong, because their disposition is too wildly arrogant, it is very difficult for them to satisfy God's desire or to be loyal to God. Therefore, they frequently cannot realize their individual wishes or honor their promises to God. They often find themselves in contradictory states: They very much wish to satisfy God to the greatest possible degree, yet they use all their might to oppose Him, and they often make vows to God but then quickly break their oaths. Even more often they find themselves in other contradictory states: They sincerely believe in God, yet they deny Him and everything that comes from Him; they anxiously hope that God will enlighten them, lead them, supply them and help them, yet they still seek their own way out. They wish to understand and to know God, yet they are unwilling to draw close to Him. Instead, they always avoid God, and their hearts are closed to Him. While they have a superficial understanding and experience of the literal meaning of God's words and of the truth, and a superficial concept of God and truth, subconsciously they still cannot confirm or determine whether God is the truth, nor confirm whether God is truly righteous. They also cannot determine the realness of God's disposition and essence, let alone His true existence. Their belief in God always contains doubts and misunderstandings, and it also contains imaginings and notions. As they enjoy God's grace, they also reluctantly experience or practice some truths that they consider feasible in order to enrich their belief, to augment their experience in believing in God, to verify their understanding of believing in God, and to satisfy their vanity by walking upon the life path that they themselves established and accomplishing a righteous undertaking for mankind. At the same time, they also do these things in order to satisfy their own desire to gain blessings, which is part of a bet that they make in hopes of receiving greater blessings for humanity, and to accomplish their ambitious aspiration and lifelong desire of not resting until they have obtained God. These people are seldom able to obtain God's enlightenment, for their desire and their intention to gain blessings are too important to them. They have no desire to give this up, and indeed they could not bear to do so. They fear that without the desire to gain blessings, without the longcherished ambition of not resting until they have obtained God, they will lose the motivation to believe in God. Therefore, they do not wish to face reality. They do not wish to face God's words or God's work. They do not wish to face up to God's disposition or essence, let alone mention the subject of knowing God. This is because once God, His essence, and His righteous disposition replace their imaginings, their dreams will go up in smoke, and their so-called pure faith and "merits" accumulated through years of painstaking work will vanish and come to nothing. Likewise, their "territory" that they have conquered with their sweat and blood over the years will face collapse. All of this will signify that their many years of hard work and effort have been futile, and that they must

begin again from nothing. This is the hardest pain for them to bear in their hearts, and it is the result that they least desire to see, which is why they are always locked in this kind of stalemate, refusing to turn back. This is the third type of person: the person who exists in the stage of the weaning infant.

The three types of people described above—meaning the people who exist in these three stages—do not possess any true belief in God's identity and status or in His righteous disposition, and nor do they have any clear, accurate recognition or affirmation of these things. Therefore, it is very difficult for these three types of people to enter the reality of the truth, and it is also difficult for them to receive God's mercy, enlightenment or illumination because the manner in which they believe in God and their mistaken attitude toward God make it impossible for Him to perform work within their hearts. Their doubts, misconceptions and imaginings about God exceed their belief and knowledge of God. These are three types of people who are very much at risk, and they are three very dangerous stages. When one maintains an attitude of doubt toward God, God's essence, God's identity, the matter of whether God is the truth and the realness of His existence, and when one cannot be sure of these things, how can one accept everything that comes from God? How can one accept the fact that God is the truth, the way and the life? How can one accept God's chastisement and judgment? How can one accept God's salvation? How can this kind of person obtain God's true guidance and provision? Those who are in these three stages can oppose God, pass judgment on God, blaspheme God or betray God at any time. They can abandon the true way and forsake God at any time. One can say that people in these three stages exist in a critical period, for they have not entered the right track of believing in God.

Type Four: The Stage of the Maturing Child, or Childhood

After a person has been weaned—that is, after they have enjoyed an ample amount of grace—they begin to explore what it means to believe in God, they begin to wish to understand different questions, such as why man lives, how man should live, and why God performs His work upon man. When these unclear thoughts and confused thought patterns emerge within them and exist within them, they continuously receive watering, and they are also able to perform their duty. During this period, they no longer have any doubts as to the truth of God's existence, and they have an accurate grasp of what it means to believe in God. Upon this foundation they gain a gradual knowledge of God, and they gradually obtain some answers to their unclear thoughts and confused thought patterns as to God's disposition and essence. In terms of their changes in disposition as well as their knowledge of God, people in this stage begin to embark upon the right track, and they enter a transition period. It is within this stage that people begin to have life. Clear indications of possessing life are the gradual solving of the various questions related to knowing God that people have in their hearts—such as misunderstandings, imaginings, notions, and vague definitions of God—and not only do they come to really

believe and recognize the realness of God's existence, but they also come to possess an accurate definition of God and have the correct place for God in their hearts, and truly following God replaces their vague faith. During this stage, people gradually come to know their misconceptions toward God and their mistaken pursuits and ways of belief. They begin to crave the truth, to crave experiencing God's judgment, chastening and discipline, and to crave a change in their disposition. They gradually leave behind all sorts of notions and imaginings about God during this stage, and at the same time they change and rectify their incorrect knowledge of God and obtain some correct fundamental knowledge of God. Although a portion of the knowledge possessed by people at this stage is not very specific or accurate, at the very least they gradually begin to abandon their notions, mistaken knowledge, and misunderstandings of God; they no longer maintain their own notions and imaginings about God. They begin to learn how to abandon—to abandon things found among their own notions, things from knowledge, and things from Satan; they begin to be willing to submit to correct and positive things, even to things that come from God's words and which conform to the truth. They also begin to attempt to experience God's words, to personally know and carry out His words, to accept His words as the principles for their actions and as the basis for changing their disposition. During this period, people unconsciously accept God's judgment and chastisement, and unconsciously accept God's words as their life. While they accept God's judgment, chastisement, and words, they become increasingly aware and able to sense that the God they believe in within their hearts truly exists. In God's words, in their experiences and their lives, they increasingly feel that God has always presided over man's fate and has always led and provided for man. Through their association with God, they gradually confirm God's existence. Therefore, before they realize it, they have already subconsciously approved of and begun to firmly believe in God's work, and they have approved of God's words. Once people approve of God's words and work, they unceasingly deny themselves, deny their own notions, deny their own knowledge, deny their own imaginings, and at the same time also unceasingly seek what the truth is and what God's will is. People's knowledge of God is quite superficial during this period of development—they are even unable to clearly elaborate on this knowledge in words, nor can they express it in terms of specific details—and they only have a perception-based understanding; however, when juxtaposed with the preceding three stages, the immature lives of people in this period have already received watering and the supply of God's words, and thus have already begun to sprout. Their lives are like a seed buried in the ground; after obtaining moisture and nutrients, it will break through the soil, and its sprouting will represent the birth of a new life. This birth allows one to glimpse the signs of life. When people have life, they grow. Therefore, upon these foundations gradually making their way onto the right track of believing in God, abandoning their own notions, obtaining God's guidance—people's lives will inevitably grow little by little. Upon what basis is this growth measured? It is measured according to the person's experience with God's words and their true understanding of God's righteous disposition. Although they find it very difficult to use their own words to accurately describe their knowledge of God and His essence during this period of growth, this group of people is no longer subjectively willing to pursue pleasure through the enjoyment of God's grace, or to believe in God in order to pursue their own purpose of obtaining His grace. Instead, they are willing to pursue a life lived by God's word and to become the subjects of God's salvation. Moreover, they are confident and ready to accept God's judgment and chastisement. This is the mark of a person in the stage of growth.

Although people in this stage have some knowledge of God's righteous disposition, this knowledge is very hazy and indistinct. While they cannot clearly elaborate on these things, they feel they have already gained something internally, for they have obtained some measure of knowledge and understanding of God's righteous disposition through God's chastisement and judgment. However, it is all rather superficial, and it is still at an elementary stage. This group of people has a specific point of view with which they treat God's grace, which is expressed in the changes to the objectives they pursue and the way in which they pursue them. They have already seen in God's words and work, in all kinds of His requirements of man and in His revelations of man, that if they still do not pursue the truth, if they still do not seek to enter reality, if they still do not seek to satisfy and know God as they experience His words, then they will lose the meaning of believing in God. They see that no matter how much they enjoy God's grace, they cannot change their disposition, satisfy God or know God, and that if people continuously live under God's grace then they will never achieve growth, obtain life or be able to receive salvation. In summary, if a person cannot truly experience God's words and is unable to know God through His words, then they will eternally remain at the stage of an infant and never make a single step forward in the growth of their life. If you forever exist in the stage of an infant, if you never enter the reality of God's word, if you never have God's word as your life, if you never possess true belief and knowledge of God, then is there any possibility for you to be made complete by God? Therefore, anyone who enters the reality of God's word, anyone who accepts God's word as their life, anyone who begins to accept God's chastisement and judgment, anyone whose corrupt disposition begins to change, and anyone who has a heart that craves the truth, who has a desire to know God and a desire to accept God's salvation, these are the people who truly possess life. This is truly the fourth type of person, that of the maturing child, the person in the stage of childhood.

Type Five: The Stage of Life's Maturation, or the Adult Stage

After experiencing and toddling through the stage of childhood, a stage of growth full of repeated ups and downs, people's lives become stabilized, their forward paces no longer pause, and nobody is able to obstruct them. Although the path ahead is still rough and rugged, they are no longer weak or fearful, and they no longer fumble ahead or lose

their bearings. Their foundations are rooted deep within the real experience of God's word, and their hearts have been drawn in by God's dignity and greatness. They crave to follow God's footsteps, to know God's essence, to know everything about God.

People in this stage already know clearly who they believe in, and they know clearly why they should believe in God and the meaning of their own lives, and they know clearly that everything God expresses is the truth. In their many years of experience, they realize that without God's judgment and chastisement, a person will never be able to satisfy or know God and will never truly be able to come before God. Within these people's hearts is a strong desire to be tried by God, so that they may see God's righteous disposition while being tried, and to attain a purer love, and at the same time be able to more truly understand and know God. People in this stage have already entirely bid farewell to the infant stage, and the stage of enjoying God's grace and eating their fill of bread. They no longer place extravagant hopes on making God tolerate and show mercy to them; rather, they are confident to receive and hope for God's unceasing chastisement and judgment, so as to separate themselves from their corrupt disposition and satisfy God. Their knowledge of God and their pursuits, or the final goals of their pursuits, are all very clear in their hearts. Therefore, people in the adult stage have already completely bid farewell to the stage of vague faith, to the stage in which they rely on grace for salvation, to the stage of immature life that cannot withstand trials, to the stage of haziness, to the stage of fumbling, to the stage of frequently having no path to walk, to the unstable period of alternating between sudden heat and cold, and to the stage where one follows God with one's eyes covered. People of this type frequently receive God's enlightenment and illumination, and frequently engage in true association and communication with God. One can say that people living in this stage have already grasped part of God's will, that they are able to find the principles of the truth in everything they do, and that they know how to satisfy God's desire. Furthermore, they have also found the path to knowing God and have begun to bear witness to their knowledge of God. During the process of gradual growth, they gain a gradual understanding and knowledge of God's will: of God's will in creating humanity, and of God's will in managing humanity. They also gradually gain understanding and knowledge of God's righteous disposition in terms of essence. No human notion or imagining can replace this knowledge. While one cannot say that in the fifth stage a person's life is completely mature or that this person is righteous or complete, this kind of person has nonetheless already taken a step toward the stage of maturity in life and is already able to come before God, to stand face to face with God's word and with God. Because this kind of person has experienced so much of God's word, experienced innumerable trials and experienced innumerable instances of discipline, judgment and chastisement from God, their submission to God is not relative but absolute. Their knowledge of God has transformed from subconscious to clear and precise knowledge, from superficial to deep, from blurry and hazy to meticulous and tangible. They have moved on from strenuous fumbling and passive seeking to effortless knowledge and proactive witnessing. It can be said that people in this stage possess the reality of the truth of God's word, that they have stepped onto a path to perfection like that path Peter walked. This is the fifth type of person, one who lives in a state of maturation—the adult stage.

December 14, 2013

God Himself, the Unique III God's Authority (II)

Today we will continue our fellowship on the topic of "God Himself, the Unique." We have already had two fellowships on this subject, the first concerning God's authority and the second concerning God's righteous disposition. After listening to these two fellowships, have you gained a new understanding of God's identity, status, and essence? Have these insights helped you achieve a more essential knowledge and certainty of the truth of God's existence? Today I plan to expand on the topic of "God's authority."

Understanding God's Authority From the Macro- and Micro-Perspectives

God's authority is unique. It is the characteristic expression of, and the special essence of, the identity of God Himself, such as is not possessed by any created or noncreated being; only the Creator possesses this kind of authority. That is to say, only the Creator—God the Unique—is expressed in this way and has this essence. So, why should we talk about God's authority? How is the authority of God Himself different from "authority" as man conceives of it in his mind? What is special about it? Why is it particularly significant to talk about it here? Each of you must carefully consider this issue. For most people, "God's authority" is a vague idea, one that requires a great deal of effort to understand, and any discussion of it is likely to be abstract. Therefore, there will invariably be a gap between the knowledge of God's authority that man is capable of possessing and the essence of God's authority. To bridge this gap, everyone must gradually come to know God's authority through the people, events, things, and various phenomena that are within the reach of humans and within their capacity to understand in their real lives. Though the phrase "God's authority" may seem unfathomable, God's authority is not at all abstract. He is present with man through every minute of man's life, leading him through every day. So, in real life, every person will necessarily see and experience the most tangible aspect of God's authority. This tangible aspect is proof enough that God's authority truly exists, and it fully allows one to recognize and to comprehend the fact that God possesses such authority.

God created everything, and having created it, He has dominion over all things. In addition to having dominion over all things, He is in control of everything. What does this mean, the idea that "God is in control of everything"? How can it be explained? How does it apply to real life? How can understanding the fact that God is in control of everything lead to an understanding of His authority? From the very phrase, "God is in control of everything," we should see that what God controls is not a portion of planets nor a portion of creation, much less a portion of mankind, but everything: from the massive to the microscopic, from the visible to the invisible, from the stars of the cosmos to the living things on earth, as well as microorganisms that cannot be seen with the

naked eye and beings that exist in other forms. This is the precise definition of the "everything" that God is "in control of"; it is the scope of His authority, the extent of His sovereignty and rule.

Before this humanity came into being, the cosmos—all the planets and all the stars in the heavens—already existed. On the macro level, these heavenly bodies have been orbiting regularly, under God's control, for their entire existence, however many years that has been. What planet goes where at what particular time; what planet performs what task, and when; what planet revolves along what orbit, and when it disappears or is replaced—all these things proceed without the slightest error. The positions of the planets and the distances between them all follow strict patterns, all of which can be described by precise data; the paths along which they travel, the speed and patterns of their orbits, the times when they are in various positions—all of these can be quantified precisely and described by special laws. For eons the planets have followed these laws, without the slightest deviation. No power can change or disrupt their orbits or the patterns they follow. Because the special laws that govern their motion and the precise data that describe them are predestined by the Creator's authority, they obey these laws of their own accord, under the Creator's sovereignty and control. On the macro level, it is not hard for man to discover some patterns, some data, and some strange and unexplainable laws or phenomena. Though humanity does not admit that God exists nor accept the fact that the Creator made and has dominion over everything, and moreover does not recognize the existence of the Creator's authority, human scientists, astronomers, and physicists are nonetheless finding more and more that the existence of all things in the universe, and the principles and patterns that dictate their movements, are all governed and controlled by a vast and invisible dark energy. This fact compels man to confront and acknowledge that there is a Mighty One in the midst of these patterns of movement, orchestrating everything. His power is extraordinary, and though no one can see His true face, He governs and controls everything at every moment. No man or force can reach beyond His sovereignty. Faced with this fact, man must recognize that the laws governing the existence of all things cannot be controlled by humans, cannot be changed by anyone; he must also admit that human beings cannot fully understand these laws, and they are not naturally occurring, but are dictated by a Sovereign. These are all expressions of the authority of God that mankind can perceive on a macro level.

On the micro level, all the mountains, rivers, lakes, seas, and landmasses that man may behold on earth, all the seasons that he experiences, all the things that inhabit the earth, including plants, animals, microorganisms, and humans, are subject to God's sovereignty and control. Under God's sovereignty and control, all things come into being or disappear in accordance with His thoughts; laws arise that govern their existence, and they grow and multiply in keeping with them. No human being or thing is above these laws. Why is this? The only answer is this: It is because of God's authority. Or, to put it

another way, it is because of God's thoughts and God's words; because of the personal actions of God Himself. This means that it is God's authority and God's mind that give rise to these laws, which shift and change according to His thoughts, and these shifts and changes all occur or fade away for the sake of His plan. Take epidemics, for example. They break out without warning. No one knows their origins or the exact reasons why they happen, and whenever an epidemic reaches a certain place, those who are doomed cannot escape calamity. Human science understands epidemics to be caused by the spread of vicious or harmful microbes, and their speed, range, and method of transmission cannot be predicted or controlled by human science. Though people resist epidemics by every means possible, they cannot control which people or animals are inevitably affected when epidemics break out. The only thing human beings can do is try to prevent them, resist them, and research them. But no one knows the root causes that explain the beginning or ending of any individual epidemic, and no one can control them. Faced with the rise and spread of an epidemic, the first measure humans take is to develop a vaccine, but often the epidemic dies out on its own before the vaccine is ready. Why do epidemics die out? Some say the germs have been brought under control, while others say they die out because of the change of seasons.... As to whether these wild speculations are tenable, science can offer no explanation and can give no precise answer. Humanity must not only reckon with these speculations, but also with mankind's lack of understanding and fear of epidemics. No one knows, in the final analysis, why epidemics begin or why they end. Because humanity has faith only in science, relies entirely upon it, and does not recognize the Creator's authority or accept His sovereignty, they will never obtain an answer.

Under God's sovereignty, all things are born, live, and perish because of His authority and His management. Some things come and go quietly, and man cannot tell where they came from or grasp the patterns they follow, much less understand the reasons why they come and go. Though man can see, with his own eyes, all that comes to pass among all things, and can hear it with his ears, and can experience it with his body; though it all has a bearing on man, and though man subconsciously grasps the relative unusualness, regularity, or even strangeness of the various phenomena, he still knows nothing about what lies behind them, which is the Creator's will and mind. There are many stories behind these phenomena, many hidden truths. Because man has wandered far from the Creator and because he does not accept the fact that the Creator's authority governs all things, he will never know and comprehend everything that happens under the sovereignty of the Creator's authority. For the most part, God's control and sovereignty exceed the bounds of human imagination, of human knowledge, of human understanding, and of what human science can achieve; it is beyond the ken of created humanity. Some people say, "Since you have not witnessed God's sovereignty yourself, how can you believe everything is subject to His authority?" Seeing is not always believing, and neither is it always recognizing and understanding. So, where does belief come from? I can say with certainty that belief comes from the degree and depth of people's apprehension of, and experience of, the reality and root causes of things. If you believe that God exists, but you cannot recognize, much less perceive, the fact of God's control and God's sovereignty over all things, then in your heart you will never admit that God has this kind of authority and that God's authority is unique. You will never truly accept the Creator to be your Lord and your God.

The Fate of Humanity and the Fate of the Universe Are Inseparable From the Creator's Sovereignty

You are all adults. Some of you are middle-aged; some have entered old age. You have gone from not believing in God to believing in Him, and from beginning to believe in God to accepting His word and experiencing His work. How much knowledge do you have of God's sovereignty? What insights have you gained into human fate? Can one achieve everything one desires in life? How many things over the few decades of your existence have you been able to accomplish in the way you wished? How many things have happened that you never anticipated? How many things come as pleasant surprises? How many things do people still wait on in the expectation that they will bear fruit—unconsciously awaiting the right moment, awaiting the will of Heaven? How many things make people feel helpless and thwarted? Everyone is full of hopes about their fate, anticipating that everything in their life will go as they wish, that they will not want for food or clothing, that their fortunes will rise spectacularly. Nobody wants a life that is poor and downtrodden, full of hardships and beset by calamities. But people cannot foresee or control these things. Perhaps for some, the past is just a jumble of experiences; they never learn what the will of Heaven is, and nor do they care what it is. They live out their lives unthinkingly, like animals, day by day, not caring about the fate of humanity or why humans are alive or how they ought to live. Such people reach old age having gained no understanding of human fate, and until the moment they die they have no idea what life is about. Such people are dead; they are beings without spirit; they are beasts. Although people live within creation and derive enjoyment from the many ways in which the world satisfies their material needs, and though they see this material world constantly advancing, yet their own experience—what their hearts and their spirits feel and experience—has nothing to do with material things, and nothing material is a substitute for experience. Experience is a recognition deep in one's heart, something that cannot be seen with the naked eye. This recognition lies in one's understanding of, and one's perception of, human life and human fate. And it often leads one to the apprehension that an unseen Master is arranging all things, orchestrating everything for man. In the midst of all this, one cannot but accept fate's arrangements and orchestrations; one cannot but accept the path ahead that the Creator has laid out, the Creator's sovereignty over one's fate. This is an undisputed fact. No matter what insight and attitude one holds about fate, no one can change this fact.

Where you will go every day, what you will do, who or what you will encounter, what you will say, what will happen to you—can any of this be predicted? People cannot foresee all these occurrences, much less control how these situations develop. In life, these unforeseeable events happen all the time; they are an everyday occurrence. These daily vicissitudes and the ways they unfold, or the patterns they follow, are constant reminders to humanity that nothing happens at random, that the process of each event's occurrence, each event's ineluctable nature, cannot be shifted by human will. Every occurrence conveys an admonition from the Creator to mankind, and it also sends the message that human beings cannot control their own fates. Every event is a rebuttal to humanity's wild, futile ambition and desire to take its fate into its own hands. They are like powerful slaps about humanity's face, one after another, forcing people to reconsider who, in the end, governs and controls their fate. And as their ambitions and desires are repeatedly thwarted and shattered, humans naturally arrive at an unconscious acceptance of what fate has in store—an acceptance of reality, of the will of Heaven and the Creator's sovereignty. From these daily vicissitudes to the fates of entire human lives, there is nothing that does not reveal the Creator's plans and His sovereignty; there is nothing that does not send the message that "the Creator's authority cannot be exceeded," that does not convey this eternal truth that "the Creator's authority is supreme."

The fates of humanity and of the universe are intimately entwined with the Creator's sovereignty, inseparably tied to the Creator's orchestrations; in the end, they are inseparable from the Creator's authority. In the laws of all things, man comes to understand the Creator's orchestrations and His sovereignty; in the rules of survival of all things, he comes to perceive the Creator's governance; in the fates of all things, he comes to infer the ways the Creator exercises His sovereignty and control over them; and in the life cycles of human beings and all things, man truly comes to experience the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements for all things and living beings, to witness how those orchestrations and arrangements supersede all earthly laws, rules, and institutions, all other powers and forces. This being so, humanity is compelled to recognize that the Creator's sovereignty cannot be violated by any created being, that no force can usurp upon or alter the events and things predestined by the Creator. It is under these divine laws and rules that humans and all things live and propagate, generation after generation. Is this not the true embodiment of the Creator's authority? Though man sees, in the objective laws, the Creator's sovereignty and His ordination for all events and all things, how many people are able to grasp the principle of the Creator's sovereignty over the universe? How many people can truly know, recognize, accept, and submit to the Creator's sovereignty over and arrangement of their own fate? Who, having believed in the fact of the Creator's sovereignty over all things, will truly believe and recognize that the Creator also dictates the fates of the lives of men? Who can truly comprehend the fact that man's fate rests in the Creator's palm? What sort of attitude

should humanity take toward the Creator's sovereignty, when confronted with the fact that He governs and controls the fate of humanity? That is a decision that every human being who is now confronted with this fact must make for themselves.

The Six Junctures in a Human Life

In the course of one's life, every person arrives at a series of critical junctures. These are the most fundamental, and the most important, steps that determine a person's fate in life. What follows is a brief description of these waymarkers that every person must pass in the course of their life.

The First Juncture: Birth

Where a person is born, what family they are born into, one's gender, appearance, and time of birth—these are the details of the first juncture of a person's life.

No one may choose certain details of this juncture; they are all predestined long in advance by the Creator. They are not influenced by the external environment in any way, and no manmade factors can change these facts, which are predetermined by the Creator. For a person to be born means that the Creator has already fulfilled the first step of the fate He has arranged for that person. Because He has predetermined all of these details long in advance, no one has the power to alter any of them. Regardless of a person's subsequent fate, the conditions of one's birth are predestined, and remain as they are; they are not in any way influenced by one's fate in life, and nor do they in any way affect the Creator's sovereignty over one's fate in life.

1) A New Life Is Born Out of the Creator's Plans

Which details of the first juncture—the place of one's birth, one's family, one's gender, one's physical appearance, the time of one's birth—is a person able to choose? Obviously, one's birth is a passive event. One is born involuntarily, in a certain place, at a certain time, into a certain family, with a certain physical appearance; one involuntarily becomes a member of a certain household, a branch of a certain family tree. One has no choice at this first life juncture, but rather is born into an environment that is fixed according to the Creator's plans, into a specific family, with a specific gender and appearance, and at a specific time that is intimately linked with the course of a person's life. What can a person do at this critical juncture? All told, one has no choice about any single one of these details concerning one's birth. Were it not for the Creator's predestination and His guidance, a life newly born into this world would not know where to go or where to stay, would have no relations, belong nowhere, and have no real home. But because of the Creator's meticulous arrangements, this new life has a place to stay, parents, a place it belongs, and relatives, and hence that life sets out on the course of its journey. Throughout this process, the materialization of this new life is determined by the Creator's plans, and everything it will come to possess is bestowed upon it by the Creator. From a free-floating body with nothing to its name, it gradually becomes a

flesh-and-blood, visible, tangible human being, one of God's creations, who thinks, breathes, and senses warm and cold; who can participate in all the usual activities of a created being in the material world; and who will undergo all the things a created human being must experience in life. The predetermination of a person's birth by the Creator means that He will bestow upon that person all things necessary for survival; and, likewise, the fact that a person is born means they will receive all things necessary for survival from the Creator, and from that point on, they will live in another form, provided for by the Creator and subject to the Creator's sovereignty.

2) Why Different Human Beings Are Born Under Different Circumstances

People often like to imagine that if they were reborn, it would be into an illustrious family; if they were women, they would look like Snow White and be loved by everybody, and if they were men, they would be Prince Charming, wanting for nothing, with the whole world at their beck and call. There are often those who labor under many illusions about their birth and are very dissatisfied with it, resenting their family, their appearance, their gender, even the time of their birth. Yet people never understand why they are born into a particular family or why they look a certain way. They do not know that regardless of where they are born or how they look, they are to play various roles and fulfill different missions in the Creator's management, and this purpose will never change. In the Creator's eyes, the place one is born, one's gender, and one's physical appearance are all temporary things. They are a series of minuscule jots, tiny symbols in each phase of His management of the whole mankind. And a person's real destination and outcome are not determined by their birth in any particular phase, but by the mission they fulfill in their life, and by the Creator's judgment upon them when His management plan is complete.

It is said that there is a cause for every effect, and that no effect is without a cause. So, one's birth is necessarily tied both to one's present life and one's previous life. If a person's death ends their current term of life, then a person's birth is the beginning of a fresh cycle; if an old cycle represents a person's previous life, then the new cycle is naturally their present life. Since one's birth is connected to one's past life as well as one's present life, it follows that the location, family, gender, appearance, and other such factors that are associated with one's birth are all necessarily related to one's past and present lives. This means that the factors of a person's birth are not only influenced by one's previous life, but are determined by one's destiny in the present life, which accounts for the variety of different circumstances into which people are born: Some are born into poor families, others into rich families. Some are of common stock, while others have illustrious lineages. Some are born in the south, others in the north. Some are born in the desert, others in verdant lands. Some people's births are accompanied by cheers, laughter, and celebrations; others bring tears, calamity, and woe. Some are born to be treasured, others to be cast aside like weeds. Some are born with fine features, others with crooked ones. Some are lovely to look upon, others are ugly. Some are born at midnight, others beneath the blaze of the noonday sun. ... The births of people of all stripes are determined by the fates the Creator has in store for them; their births determine their fates in their present lives as well as the roles they will play and the missions they will fulfill. All this is subject to the Creator's sovereignty, predestined by Him; no one can escape their predestined lot, no one can change their birth, and no one can choose their fate.

The Second Juncture: Growing Up

Depending on what kind of family they are born into, people grow up in different home environments and learn different lessons from their parents. These factors determine the conditions under which a person comes of age, and growing up represents the second critical juncture of a person's life. Needless to say, people have no choice at this juncture, either. It too is fixed, prearranged.

1) The Creator Planned the Fixed Conditions for Each Person's Coming of Age

A person cannot choose the people, events, or things they are edified and influenced by as they grow up. One cannot choose what knowledge or skills one acquires, what habits one forms. One has no say in who one's parents and relatives are, what kind of environment one grows up in; one's relationships with the people, events, and things in one's surroundings, and how they influence one's development, are all beyond one's control. Who decides these things, then? Who arranges them? Since people have no choice in the matter, since they cannot decide these things for themselves, and since they obviously do not take shape naturally, it goes without saying that the formation of all these people, events, and things rests in the hands of the Creator. Of course, just as the Creator arranges the particular circumstances of every person's birth, He also arranges the specific circumstances under which one grows up. If a person's birth brings changes to the people, events, and things around them, then that person's growth and development will necessarily affect them as well. For example, some people are born into poor families, but grow up surrounded by wealth; others are born into affluent families but cause their families' fortunes to decline, such that they grow up in poor environments. No one's birth is governed by a fixed rule, and no one grows up under an inevitable, fixed set of circumstances. These are not things that a person can imagine or control; they are the products of one's fate, and are determined by one's fate. Of course, at their root, these things are determined by the fate that the Creator predestines for each person; they are determined by the Creator's sovereignty over that person's fate and His plans for it.

2) The Various Circumstances Under Which People Grow Up Give Rise to Different Roles

The circumstances of a person's birth establish on a basic level the environment and

circumstances in which they grow up, and the circumstances in which a person grows up are likewise a product of the circumstances of their birth. During this time, one begins to learn language, and one's mind begins to encounter and assimilate many new things, a process during which one is constantly growing. The things a person hears with one's ears, sees with one's eyes, and absorbs with one's mind gradually fill and animate one's inner world. The people, events, and things that one comes into contact with; the common sense, knowledge, and skills one learns; and the ways of thinking that influence one, with which one is inculcated or taught, will all guide and influence a person's fate in life. The language that one learns as one grows and one's way of thinking are inseparable from the environment in which one spends one's youth, and that environment consists of parents and siblings, and the other people, events, and things around them. So, the course of a person's development is determined by the environment in which one grows up, and also depends on the people, events, and things that one comes into contact with during this period of time. Since the conditions in which a person grows up are predetermined long in advance, the environment in which one lives during this process is also, naturally, predetermined. It is not decided by a person's choices and preferences, but according to the Creator's plans, determined by the Creator's careful arrangements and His sovereignty over a person's fate in life. So, the people that any person encounters in the course of growing up, and the things they come into contact with, are all naturally connected with the orchestrations and arrangements of the Creator. People cannot foresee these kinds of complex interrelationships, nor can they control them or fathom them. Many different things and people have a bearing on the environment in which a person grows up, and no human being is capable of arranging or orchestrating such a vast web of connections. No person or thing except the Creator can control the appearance of all people, things and events, nor can they maintain them or control their disappearance, and it is just such a vast web of connections that shapes a person's development as predestined by the Creator and builds the various environments in which people grow up. It is what creates the various roles necessary for the Creator's work of management, laying solid, strong foundations for people to successfully fulfill their missions.

The Third Juncture: Independence

After a person has passed through childhood and adolescence and gradually and inevitably reaches maturity, the next step is for them to part completely from their youth, say goodbye to their parents, and face the road ahead as an independent adult. At this point, they must confront all the people, events, and things that an adult must face, confront all the parts of their fate which will soon present themselves. This is the third juncture that a person must pass through.

1) After Becoming Independent, a Person Begins to Experience the Sovereignty of the Creator

If a person's birth and growing up are the "preparatory period" for one's journey in life, laying the cornerstone of a person's fate, then one's independence is the opening soliloguy to one's fate in life. If a person's birth and growing up are wealth they have amassed in preparation for their fate in life, then a person's independence is when they begin spending or adding to that wealth. When one leaves one's parents and becomes independent, the social conditions one faces, and the kind of work and career available to one are both decreed by fate and have nothing to do with one's parents. Some people choose a good major in college and end up finding a satisfactory job after graduation, making a triumphant first stride in the journey of their lives. Some people learn and master many different skills and yet never find a job that suits them or never find their position, much less have a career; at the outset of their life journey, they find themselves thwarted at every turn, beset by troubles, their prospects dismal and their lives uncertain. Some people apply themselves diligently to their studies, yet narrowly miss every chance to receive a higher education; they seem fated never to achieve success, their very first aspiration in the journey of their lives having dissolved into thin air. Not knowing whether the road ahead is smooth or rocky, they feel for the first time how full of variables human destiny is, and so regard life with expectation and dread. Some people, despite not being very well educated, write books and achieve a measure of fame; some, though almost totally illiterate, make money in business and are thereby able to support themselves.... What occupation one chooses, how one makes a living: do people have any control over whether they make a good choice or a bad choice in these things? Do these things accord with people's desires and decisions? Most people have the following wishes: to work less and earn more, not to toil in the sun and rain, to dress well, to glow and shine everywhere, to tower above others, and to bring honor to their ancestors. People hope for perfection, but when they take their first steps in the journey of their lives, they gradually come to realize how imperfect human destiny is, and for the first time they truly grasp the fact that, though one can make bold plans for one's future and though one may harbor audacious fantasies, no one has the ability or the power to realize their own dreams, and no one is in a position to control their own future. There will always be some distance between one's dreams and the realities that one must confront; things are never as one would like them to be, and faced with such realities, people can never achieve satisfaction or contentment. Some people will go to any length imaginable, will put forth great efforts and make great sacrifices for the sake of their livelihoods and future, in an attempt to change their own fate. But in the end, even if they can realize their dreams and desires by means of their own hard work, they can never change their fates, and no matter how doggedly they try, they can never exceed what destiny has allotted them. Regardless of differences in ability, intelligence, and willpower, people are all equal before fate, which does not distinguish between the great and the small, the high and

the low, the exalted and the mean. What occupation one pursues, what one does for a living, and how much wealth one amasses in life are not decided by one's parents, one's talents, one's efforts or one's ambitions, but are predetermined by the Creator.

2) Leaving One's Parents and Beginning in Earnest to Play One's Role in the Theater of Life

When one reaches maturity, one is able to leave one's parents and strike out on one's own, and it is at this point that one truly begins to play one's own role, that the fog lifts and one's mission in life gradually becomes clear. Nominally, one still stays closely tied to one's parents, but because one's mission and the role one plays in life have nothing to do with one's mother and father, in essence this intimate tie breaks down as a person gradually becomes independent. From a biological perspective, people cannot help still being dependent on their parents in subconscious ways, but objectively speaking, once they are fully grown, they have entirely separate lives from their parents and will perform the roles they assume independently. Besides birth and childrearing, the parents' responsibility in their children's lives is simply to provide them with a formal environment to grow up in, for nothing except the predestination of the Creator has a bearing on a person's fate. No one can control what kind of future a person will have; it is predetermined long in advance, and not even one's parents can change one's fate. As far as fate is concerned, everyone is independent, and everyone has their own fate. So, no one's parents can stave off one's fate in life or exert the slightest influence on the role one plays in life. It could be said that the family into which one is destined to be born and the environment in which one grows up are nothing more than the preconditions for fulfilling one's mission in life. They do not in any way determine a person's fate in life or the kind of destiny within which a person fulfills their mission. And so, no one's parents can assist one in accomplishing one's mission in life, and likewise, no one's relatives can help one assume one's role in life. How one accomplishes one's mission and in what kind of living environment one performs one's role are entirely determined by one's fate in life. In other words, no other objective conditions can influence a person's mission, which is predestined by the Creator. All people become mature in the particular environments in which they grow up; then gradually, step by step, they set off down their own roads in life and fulfill the destinies planned for them by the Creator. Naturally, involuntarily, they enter the vast sea of humanity and assume their own posts in life, where they begin to fulfill their responsibilities as created beings for the sake of the Creator's predestination, for the sake of His sovereignty.

The Fourth Juncture: Marriage

As one grows older and matures, one grows more distant from one's parents and the environment in which one was born and raised, and instead begins to seek a direction in life and to pursue one's own life goals in a style different from one's parents. During this time, one no longer needs one's parents, but rather a partner with whom one

can spend one's life, that is, a spouse, a person with whom one's fate is intimately entwined. So, the first major life event after independence is marriage, the fourth juncture one must pass through.

1) Individual Choice Does Not Enter Into Marriage

Marriage is a key event in any person's life; it is the time when one starts truly to assume various kinds of responsibilities, and gradually to complete various kinds of missions. People harbor many illusions about marriage before they experience it themselves, and all these illusions are quite beautiful. Women imagine that their other halves will be Prince Charming, and men imagine that they will marry Snow White. These fantasies go to show that every person has certain requirements for marriage, their own set of demands and standards. Though in this evil age people are constantly bombarded with distorted messages about marriage, which create even more additional requirements and give people all sorts of baggage and strange attitudes, any person who has experienced marriage knows that no matter how one understands it, no matter what one's attitude toward it is, marriage is not a matter of individual choice.

One encounters many people in one's life, but no one knows who will become one's partner in marriage. Though everyone has their own ideas and personal stances on the subject of marriage, no one can foresee who will truly, finally become their other half, and one's own ideas on the matter count for little. After meeting someone you like, you can pursue that person; but whether they are interested in you, whether they are able to become your partner—that is not yours to decide. The object of your affections is not necessarily the person with whom you will be able to share your life; and meanwhile, someone you never expected may quietly enter your life and become your partner, the most important element in your fate, your other half, to whom your fate is inextricably bound. And so, though there are millions of marriages in the world, each and every one is different: So many marriages are unsatisfactory, so many are happy; so many span East and West, so many North and South; so many are perfect matches, so many are of equal social rank; so many are happy and harmonious, so many painful and sorrowful; so many arouse the envy of others, so many are misunderstood and frowned upon; so many are full of joy, so many are awash with tears and bring despair.... In these myriad types of marriage, humans reveal loyalty and lifelong commitment toward marriage; they reveal love, attachment, and inseparability, or resignation and incomprehension. Some betray their marriage, or even feel hatred toward it. Whether marriage itself brings happiness or pain, everyone's mission in marriage is predestined by the Creator and will not change; this mission is something that everyone must complete. The fate of each person that lies behind every marriage is unchanging, determined long in advance by the Creator.

2) Marriage Is Born of the Fates of Both Partners

Marriage is an important juncture in a person's life. It is the product of a person's fate

and a crucial link in one's fate; it is not founded on any person's individual volition or preferences, and is not influenced by any external factors, but completely determined by the fates of the two parties, by the Creator's arrangements and predeterminations for the fates of both members of the couple. On the surface, the purpose of marriage is to continue the human race, but in truth, marriage is nothing but a ritual that one undergoes in the process of completing one's mission. In marriage, people do not merely play the role of rearing the next generation; they adopt all the various roles involved in maintaining a marriage and the missions those roles require one to complete. Since one's birth influences the changes undergone by the people, events, and things that surround it, one's marriage will also inevitably affect these people, events, and things, and furthermore, will transform them all in various ways.

When one becomes independent, one begins one's own journey in life, which leads one, step by step, toward the people, events, and things that have a connection to one's marriage. At the same time, the other person who will be in that marriage is approaching, step by step, toward those same people, events, and things. Under the Creator's sovereignty, two unrelated people with related fates gradually enter into a single marriage and become, miraculously, a family: "two locusts clinging to the same rope." So, when one enters into a marriage, one's journey in life will influence and touch upon one's other half, and likewise one's partner's journey in life will influence and touch upon one's own fate in life. In other words, human fates are interconnected, and no one can complete one's mission in life or perform one's role in complete independence from others. One's birth has a bearing on a huge chain of relationships; growing up also involves a complex chain of relationships; and similarly, a marriage inevitably exists and is maintained within a vast and complex web of human connections, involving every member of that web and influencing the fate of everyone who is a part of it. A marriage is not the product of both members' families, the circumstances in which they grew up, their appearances, their ages, their qualities, their talents, or any other factors; rather, it arises from a shared mission and a related fate. This is the origin of marriage, a product of human fate orchestrated and arranged by the Creator.

The Fifth Juncture: Progeny

After marrying, one begins to raise the next generation. One has no say in how many and what kind of children one has; this too is determined by a person's fate, predestined by the Creator. This is the fifth juncture through which a person must pass.

If one is born in order to fulfill the role of someone's child, then one rears the next generation to fulfill the role of someone's parent. This shift in roles makes one experience different phases of life from different perspectives. It also gives one different sets of life experience through which one comes to know the sovereignty of the Creator, which is always enacted in the same way, and through which one encounters the fact that no one can overstep or alter the predestination of the Creator.

1) One Has No Control Over What Becomes of One's Offspring

Birth, growing up, and marriage all bring disappointment of various kinds and in different degrees. Some people are dissatisfied with their families or their own physical appearance; some dislike their parents; some resent or have complaints about the environment in which they grew up. And for most people, among all these disappointments, marriage is the most dissatisfactory. No matter how dissatisfied one is with one's birth, maturation, or marriage, everyone who has gone through these things knows that one cannot choose where and when they were born, what they look like, who their parents are, and who their spouse is, but must simply accept the will of Heaven. Yet when it comes time for people to raise the next generation, they will project all the desires they failed to realize in the first half of their lives onto their descendants, hoping that their offspring will make up for all the disappointments of the first half of their own lives. So people indulge in all kinds of fantasies about their children: that their daughters will grow up to be stunning beauties, their sons dashing gentlemen; that their daughters will be cultured and talented and their sons brilliant students and star athletes; that their daughters will be gentle, virtuous, and sensible, and their sons intelligent, capable, and sensitive. They hope that their offspring, whether they be daughters or sons, will respect their elders, be considerate of their parents, be loved and praised by everyone.... At this point, hopes for life spring afresh, and new passions are kindled in people's hearts. People know that they are powerless and hopeless in this life, that they will not have another chance or another hope to stand out from the crowd, and that they have no choice but to accept their fates. And so they project all their hopes, their unrealized desires and ideals, onto the next generation, hoping that their offspring can help them achieve their dreams and realize their desires; that their daughters and sons will bring glory to the family name, become important, rich, or famous. In short, they want to see their children's fortunes soar. People's plans and fantasies are perfect; do they not know that the number of children they have, their children's appearance, abilities, and so forth, are not for them to decide, that not a bit of their children's fates is in their hands? Humans are not the masters of their own fate, yet they hope to change the fates of the younger generation; they are powerless to escape their own fates, yet they try to control those of their sons and daughters. Are they not overestimating themselves? Is this not human foolishness and ignorance? People will go to any length for the sake of their offspring, but in the end, one's plans and desires cannot dictate how many children one has or what those children are like. Some people are penniless but beget many children; some people are wealthy yet have not a single child. Some want a daughter but are denied that wish; some want a son but fail to produce a male child. For some, children are a blessing; for others, they are a curse. Some couples are intelligent, yet give birth to slowwitted children; some parents are industrious and honest, yet the children they raise are indolent. Some parents are kind and upright but have children who turn out to be sly and vicious. Some parents are sound in mind and body but give birth to handicapped

children. Some parents are ordinary and unsuccessful yet have children who achieve great things. Some parents are of low status yet have children who rise to eminence. ...

2) After Raising the Next Generation, People Gain a New Understanding of Fate

Most people who enter wedlock do so around age thirty, a time in life at which one does not yet have any understanding of human fate. But when people begin to raise children, and as their offspring grow, they watch the new generation repeat the life and all the experiences of the previous generation, and, seeing their own pasts reflected in them, they realize that the path walked by the younger generation, just like their own, cannot be planned and chosen. Faced with this fact, they have no choice but to admit that every person's fate is predestined, and without quite realizing it, they gradually lay aside their own desires, and the passions in their hearts sputter and die out.... People in this period, having essentially passed the important waymarkers of life, have achieved a new understanding of life, adopted a new attitude. How much can a person of this age expect from the future and what prospects do they have to look forward to? What fiftyyear-old woman is still dreaming of Prince Charming? What fifty-year-old man is still looking for his Snow White? What middle-aged woman is still hoping to turn from an ugly duckling into a swan? Do most older men have the same career drive as young men? In sum, regardless of whether one is a man or a woman, anyone who lives to this age is likely to have a relatively rational, practical attitude toward marriage, family, and children. Such a person has essentially no choices left, no urge to challenge fate. As far as human experience goes, as soon as one reaches this age, one naturally develops a certain attitude: "One must accept fate; one's children have their own fortunes; human fate is ordained by Heaven." Most people who do not understand the truth, after having weathered all the vicissitudes, frustrations, and hardships of this world, will summarize their insights into human life with two words: "That's fate!" Though this phrase encapsulates worldly people's realization of human fate and the conclusion to which they have come, and though it expresses humanity's helplessness and could be described as incisive and accurate, it is a far cry from an understanding of the Creator's sovereignty, and is simply no substitute for knowledge of the Creator's authority.

3) Believing in Fate Is No Substitute for Knowledge of the Creator's Sovereignty

Having followed God for so many years, is there an essential difference between your knowledge of fate and that of the worldly people? Have you truly understood the predestination of the Creator and truly come to know the Creator's sovereignty? Some people have a profound, deeply felt understanding of the phrase "that's fate," yet they do not believe in God's sovereignty in the least; they do not believe that human fate is arranged and orchestrated by God, and are unwilling to submit to the sovereignty of God. Such people are as if adrift on the ocean, tossed by the waves, drifting with the current,

with no choice but to wait passively and resign themselves to fate. Yet they do not recognize that human fate is subject to God's sovereignty; they cannot on their own initiative come to know God's sovereignty and thereby achieve knowledge of God's authority, submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, stop resisting fate, and live under God's care, protection, and guidance. In other words, accepting fate is not the same thing as submitting to the Creator's sovereignty; belief in fate does not mean that one accepts, recognizes, and knows the Creator's sovereignty; belief in fate is mere recognition of its truth and its superficial manifestations. This is different from knowing how the Creator rules humanity's fate, from recognizing the Creator is the source of dominion over the fates of all things, and certainly a far cry from submitting to the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements for humanity's fate. If a person only believes in fate—even if they feel deeply about it—but is not thereby able to know and recognize the Creator's sovereignty over the fate of humanity, to submit to it and accept it, then their life will nonetheless be a tragedy, a life lived in vain, a void; they will still be unable to come under the Creator's dominion, to become a created human being in the truest sense of the term, and to enjoy the Creator's approval. A person who truly knows and experiences the Creator's sovereignty should be in an active state, not a state that is passive or helpless. While such a person would accept that all things are fated, they should possess an accurate definition of life and fate: Every life is subject to the Creator's sovereignty. When one looks back on the road one has walked, when one recollects every phase of one's journey, one sees that at every step, whether one's journey was arduous or smooth, God was guiding one's path, planning it out. It was God's meticulous arrangements, His careful planning, that led one, unknowingly, to today. To be able to accept the Creator's sovereignty, to receive His salvation—what great fortune that is! If a person has a negative attitude toward fate, it proves that they are resisting everything that God has arranged for them, that they do not have a submissive attitude. If one has a positive attitude toward God's sovereignty over human fate, then when one looks back upon one's journey, when one truly comes to grips with God's sovereignty, one will more earnestly desire to submit to everything that God has arranged, will have more determination and confidence to let God orchestrate one's fate and to stop rebelling against God. For one sees that when one does not comprehend fate, when one does not understand God's sovereignty, when one gropes their way forward willfully, staggering and tottering through the fog, the journey is too difficult, too heartbreaking. So when people recognize God's sovereignty over human fate, the clever ones choose to know it and accept it, to bid farewell to the painful days when they tried to build a good life with their own two hands, and to stop struggling against fate and pursuing their socalled "life goals" in their own way. When one does not have God, when one cannot see Him, when one cannot clearly recognize God's sovereignty, every day is meaningless, worthless, miserable. Wherever one is, whatever one's job is, one's means of living and the pursuit of one's goals bring one nothing but endless heartbreak and suffering without relief, such that one cannot bear to look back on one's past. Only when one accepts the Creator's sovereignty, submits to His orchestrations and arrangements, and seeks true human life will one gradually begin to break free from all heartbreak and suffering, and to be rid of all the emptiness of life.

4) Only Those Who Submit to the Creator's Sovereignty Can Attain True Freedom

Because people do not recognize God's orchestrations and God's sovereignty, they always face fate defiantly and with a rebellious attitude, and they always want to cast off God's authority and sovereignty and the things fate has in store, hoping in vain to change their current circumstances and alter their fate. But they can never succeed and are thwarted at every turn. This struggle, which takes place deep in one's soul, brings profound pain of the sort that carves itself into one's bones, as one fritters away their life all the while. What is the cause of this pain? Is it because of God's sovereignty, or because a person was born unlucky? Obviously, neither is true. At bottom, it is caused by the paths people take, the ways they choose to live their lives. Some people may not have realized these things. But when you truly know, when you truly come to recognize that God has sovereignty over human fate, when you truly understand that everything God has planned for you and decided for you is a great benefit and protection, then you feel your pain begin to lighten, and your whole being becomes relaxed, free, liberated. Judging from the states of the majority of people, they objectively cannot truly come to terms with the practical value and meaning of the Creator's sovereignty over human fate, even though on a subjective level, they do not want to keep on living as they did before and want relief from their pain; objectively, they cannot truly recognize and submit to the Creator's sovereignty, and still less do they know how to seek out and accept the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements. So, if people cannot truly recognize the fact that the Creator has sovereignty over human fate and over all human matters, if they cannot truly submit to the Creator's dominion, then it will be difficult for them not to be driven and fettered by the idea that "one's fate is in one's own hands." It will be difficult for them to shake off the pain of their intense struggle against fate and the Creator's authority, and, needless to say, it will also be hard for them to become truly liberated and free, to become people who worship God. But there is an exceedingly simple way to free oneself from this state, which is to bid farewell to one's former way of living; to say goodbye to one's previous goals in life; to summarize and analyze one's previous lifestyle, view of life, pursuits, desires, and ideals; and then to compare them with God's will and demands for man, and see whether any of them is consistent with God's will and demands, whether any of them delivers the right values of life, leads one to a greater understanding of the truth, and allows one to live with humanity and the likeness of a human being. When you repeatedly investigate and carefully dissect the various goals that people pursue in life and their myriad ways of living, you will find not one of them

conforms to the Creator's original intention with which He created humanity. All of them draw people away from the Creator's sovereignty and care; they are all traps which cause people to become depraved, and which lead them to hell. After you recognize this, your task is to lay aside your old view of life, stay far from various traps, let God take charge of your life and make arrangements for you; it is to try only to submit to God's orchestrations and guidance, to live without individual choice, and to become a person who worships God. This sounds easy, but is a hard thing to do. Some people can bear the pain of it, others cannot. Some are willing to comply, others are unwilling. Those who are unwilling lack the desire and the resolution to do so; they are clearly aware of God's sovereignty, know perfectly well that it is God who plans out and arranges human fate, and yet they still kick and struggle and remain unreconciled to laying their fates in God's palm and submitting to God's sovereignty; moreover, they resent God's orchestrations and arrangements. So there will always be some people who want to see for themselves what they are capable of; they want to change their fates with their own two hands, or to achieve happiness by their own power, to see whether they can overstep the bounds of God's authority and rise above God's sovereignty. The tragedy of man is not that he seeks a happy life, not that he pursues fame and fortune or struggles against his own fate through the fog, but that after he has seen the Creator's existence, after he has learned the fact that the Creator has sovereignty over human fate, he still cannot mend his ways, cannot pull his feet out of the mire, but hardens his heart and persists in his errors. He would rather keep thrashing in the mud, vying obstinately against the Creator's sovereignty, resisting it until the bitter end, all without the slightest shred of contrition. It is only when he lies broken and bleeding that he at last decides to give up and turn back. This is true human sorrow. So I say, those who choose to submit are wise, and those who choose to struggle and flee are foolish indeed.

The Sixth Juncture: Death

After so much hustle and bustle, so many frustrations and disappointments, after so many joys and sorrows and ups and downs, after so many unforgettable years, after watching the seasons turn time and again, one has passed the important waymarkers in life without noticing, and in a flash, one finds oneself in one's twilight years. The marks of time are stamped all over one's body: One can no longer stand tall, one's hair turns from dark to white, while eyes once bright and lucid turn dim and cloudy, and smooth, supple skin becomes wrinkled and spotted. One's hearing weakens, one's teeth loosen and fall out, one's reactions become sluggish, one's movements slow.... At this point, one has bid a final farewell to the passionate years of one's youth and entered the twilight of one's life: old age. Next, one will face death, the last juncture in a human life.

1) Only the Creator Holds the Power of Life and Death Over Man

If one's birth was destined by one's previous life, then one's death marks the end of that destiny. If one's birth is the beginning of one's mission in this life, then one's death

marks the end of that mission. Since the Creator has determined a fixed set of circumstances for a person's birth, it goes without saying that He has also arranged a fixed set of circumstances for one's death. In other words, no one is born by chance, no one's death arrives abruptly, and both birth and death are necessarily connected with one's previous and present lives. The circumstances of one's birth and death are both predetermined by the Creator; this is a person's destiny, a person's fate. Since there are many explanations for a person's birth, it is also true that a person's death will naturally occur under its own, special set of various circumstances. This is the reason for people's varying lifespans and the different manners and times of their deaths. Some people are strong and healthy, yet die young; others are weak and sickly, yet live to an old age and pass away peacefully. Some perish of unnatural causes, others die naturally. Some end their lives far from home, others shut their eyes for the final time with their loved ones by their side. Some people die in midair, others beneath the earth. Some sink beneath the water, others are lost in disasters. Some die in the morning, others at night. ... Everyone wants an illustrious birth, a brilliant life, and a glorious death, but no one can reach past their own destiny, no one can escape the Creator's sovereignty. This is human fate. Man can make all kinds of plans for his future, but no one can plan the manner and time of their birth and of their departure from the world. Though people do their best to avoid and resist the coming of death, still, unbeknownst to them, death silently draws near. No one knows when they will perish or how, much less where it will happen. Obviously, it is not humanity that holds the power of life and death, not some being in the natural world, but the Creator, whose authority is unique. Mankind's life and death are not the product of some law of the natural world, but a consequence of the sovereignty of the Creator's authority.

2) One Who Does Not Know the Creator's Sovereignty Will Be Haunted by the Fear of Death

When one enters old age, the challenge one faces is not providing for a family or establishing one's grand ambitions in life, but how to bid farewell to one's life, how to meet the end of one's life, how to put a period at the end of the sentence of one's life. Though on the surface, it seems that people pay little attention to death, no one can avoid exploring the subject, for no one knows whether another world lies on the far side of death, a world that humans cannot perceive or feel, that they know nothing about. This makes people afraid to face death head-on, afraid to confront it as they ought; instead, they do their best to avoid the subject. And so it fills every person with dread about death, and adds a veil of mystery to this inevitable fact of life, casting a persistent shadow over every person's heart.

When one feels one's body deteriorating, when one senses that one is drawing nearer to death, one feels a vague dread, an inexpressible fear. Fear of death makes one feel ever lonelier and more helpless, and at this point, one asks oneself: Where did man come from? Where is man going? Is this how man dies, with his life having rushed past him? Is this the period that marks the end of man's life? What, in the end, is the meaning of life? What is life worth, after all? Is it about fame and fortune? Is it about raising a family? ... Regardless of whether one has thought about these specific questions, regardless of how deeply one fears death, in the depths of every person's heart there is always a desire to probe the mysteries, a feeling of incomprehension about life, and mixed in with these, sentimentality about the world, a reluctance to leave. Perhaps no one can clearly articulate what it is that man fears, what it is that man seeks, what it is that he is sentimental about and what he is reluctant to leave behind ...

Because they fear death, people have so many worries; because they fear death, people have so much they cannot let go of. When they are about to die, some people fret about this or that; they worry about their children, their loved ones, their wealth, as if by worrying, they can erase the suffering and dread that death brings, as if by maintaining a kind of intimacy with the living, they can escape the helplessness and loneliness that accompany death. In the depths of the human heart there lies a vague fear, a fear of being parted from one's loved ones, of never again laying eyes upon the blue sky, of never again looking upon the material world. A lonely soul, accustomed to the company of its loved ones, is reluctant to release its grip and depart, all alone, for a world that is unknown and unfamiliar.

3) A Life Spent Seeking Fame and Fortune Leaves One at a Loss in the Face of Death

Because of the Creator's sovereignty and predestination, a lonely soul that started out with nothing to its name gains parents and a family, the chance to become a member of the human race, the chance to experience human life and see the world. This soul also gains the chance to experience the Creator's sovereignty, to know the marvelousness of the Creator's creation, and more than that, to know and become subject to the Creator's authority. Yet most people do not really seize this rare and fleeting opportunity. One exhausts a lifetime's worth of energy fighting against fate, spends all of one's time bustling about, trying to feed one's family and shuttling back and forth between wealth and status. The things that people treasure are family, money, and fame, and they view these as the most valuable things in life. All people complain about their fates, yet still they push to the back of their minds the issues that are most imperative to examine and understand: why man is alive, how man should live, what the value and meaning of life are. They spend their entire lives, however long they may last, merely rushing about seeking fame and fortune, until their youth has fled and they have become gray and wrinkled. They live in this way until they see that fame and fortune cannot stop their slide toward senility, that money cannot fill the emptiness of the heart, that no one is exempt from the laws of birth, aging, sickness, and death, that no one can escape what fate has in store. Only when they are forced to confront life's final juncture

do they truly grasp that even if one owns vast wealth and extensive assets, even if one is privileged and of high rank, one still cannot escape death and must return to their original position: a solitary soul, with nothing to its name. When people have parents, they believe their parents are everything; when people have property, they think that money is one's mainstay, that it is the means by which one lives; when people have status, they cling tightly to it and would risk their lives for its sake. Only when people are about to let go of this world do they realize that the things they spent their lives pursuing are nothing but fleeting clouds, none of which they can hold onto, none of which they can take with them, none of which can exempt them from death, none of which can provide company or consolation to a lonely soul on its journey back; least of all, none of these things can save a person and enable them to transcend death. The fame and fortune that one gains in the material world give temporary satisfaction, passing pleasure, a false sense of ease; in the process, they cause one to lose one's way. And so people, as they thrash about in the vast sea of humanity, craving peace, comfort, and tranquility of heart, are engulfed by wave after wave. When people have yet to figure out the questions that are most crucial to understand—where they come from, why they are alive, where they are going, and so forth—they are seduced by fame and fortune, misled and controlled by them and irrevocably lost. Time flies; years pass in the blink of an eye, and before one realizes it, one has bid farewell to the best years of one's life. When one is soon to depart from the world, one arrives at the gradual realization that everything in the world is drifting away, that one can no longer hold onto possessions that originally were theirs; then one truly feels that one is like a wailing infant that has just emerged into the world, with nothing yet to their name. At this point, one is compelled to ponder what one has done in life, what being alive is worth, what it means, why one came into the world. And it is at this point that one increasingly wants to know whether there really is a next life, whether Heaven really exists, whether there really is retribution.... The nearer one comes to death, the more one wants to understand what life is really about; the nearer one comes to death, the more one's heart seems empty; the nearer one comes to death, the more helpless one feels; and so one's fear of death grows greater by the day. There are two reasons such feelings manifest in people as they approach death: First, they are about to lose the fame and wealth upon which their lives have depended, about to leave behind all that the eye beholds in the world; and second, they are about to confront, all alone, an unfamiliar world, a mysterious, unknown realm where they are afraid to set foot, where they have no loved ones and no means of support. For these two reasons, everyone who faces death feels uneasy, experiences panic and a sense of helplessness such as they have never known before. Only when someone has actually come to this point do they realize that when one sets foot on this earth, the first thing they must understand is where human beings come from, why people are alive, who dictates human fate, and who provides for and has sovereignty over human existence. This knowledge is the true means by which one lives, the essential basis for human survival—not learning how to provide for one's family or how to achieve fame and wealth, not learning how to stand out from the crowd nor how to live a more affluent life, much less learning how to excel and to compete successfully against others. Though the various survival skills that people spend their lives mastering can offer an abundance of material comforts, they never bring true peace and consolation to one's heart, but instead make people constantly lose their direction, have difficulty controlling themselves, and miss every opportunity to learn the meaning of life; these survival skills create an undercurrent of anxiety about how to face death properly. People's lives are ruined in this way. The Creator treats everyone fairly, giving everyone a lifetime's worth of opportunities to experience and know His sovereignty, yet it is only when death draws near, when its specter looms, that one begins to see the light—and then it is too late!

People spend their lives chasing after money and fame; they clutch at these straws, thinking they are their only means of support, as if by having them they could live on, exempt from death. But only when they are about to die do they realize how distant these things are from them, how weak they are in the face of death, how easily they shatter, how lonely and helpless they are, with nowhere to turn. They realize that life cannot be bought with money or fame, that no matter how wealthy a person may be, no matter how lofty their position, all are equally poor and insignificant in the face of death. They realize that money cannot buy life, that fame cannot erase death, that neither money nor fame can lengthen a person's life by a single minute, a single second. The more people feel this way, the more they yearn to keep on living; the more people feel this way, the more they dread the approach of death. Only at this point do they truly realize that their lives do not belong to them, are not theirs to control, and that one has no say over whether one lives or dies—that all of this lies outside of one's control.

4) Come Under the Creator's Dominion and Face Death Calmly

At the moment a person is born, one lonely soul begins its experience of life on earth, its experience of the Creator's authority which the Creator has arranged for it. Needless to say, for the person—the soul—this is an excellent opportunity to gain knowledge of the Creator's sovereignty, to come to know His authority and to experience it personally. People live their lives within the laws of fate laid out for them by the Creator, and for any rational person with a conscience, coming to terms, over the decades of their life, with the Creator's sovereignty and coming to know His authority is not a difficult thing to do. Therefore, it should be very easy for every person to recognize, through their own life experiences over several decades, that all human fates are predestined, and it should be easy to grasp or to summarize what it means to be alive. As one embraces these life lessons, one will gradually come to understand where life comes from, to grasp what the heart truly needs, what will lead one to the true path of life, and what the mission and goal of a human life ought to be. One will gradually recognize that if one does not worship the Creator, if one does not come under His dominion, then when the time comes to

confront death—when one's soul is about to face the Creator once more—one's heart will be filled with boundless dread and turmoil. If a person has been in the world for several decades yet has not understood where human life comes from nor recognized in whose palm human fate rests, then it is no wonder that they will not be able to face death calmly. A person who has gained, in their decades of experience of human life, knowledge of the Creator's sovereignty is a person with a correct appreciation for the meaning and value of life. Such a person has a deep knowledge of life's purpose, with real experience and understanding of the Creator's sovereignty, and beyond that, is able to submit to the Creator's authority. Such a person understands the meaning of God's creation of mankind, understands that man should worship the Creator, that everything man possesses comes from the Creator and will return to Him some day not far in the future. This kind of person understands that the Creator arranges man's birth and has sovereignty over man's death, and that both life and death are predestined by the Creator's authority. So, when one truly grasps these things, one will naturally be able to face death calmly, to calmly lay aside all one's worldly possessions, accept and submit happily to all that follows, and welcome the last life-juncture, arranged, as it is, by the Creator, rather than blindly dreading it and struggling against it. If one views life as an opportunity to experience the Creator's sovereignty and come to know His authority, if one sees one's life as a rare chance to perform one's duty as a created human being and to complete one's mission, then one will surely have the correct outlook on life, will surely live a life blessed and guided by the Creator, will surely walk in the light of the Creator, will surely know the Creator's sovereignty, will surely come under His dominion, and surely become a witness to His miraculous deeds, a witness to His authority. Needless to say, such a person will surely be loved and accepted by the Creator, and only such a person can hold a calm attitude toward death and welcome life's final juncture with joy. One person who obviously held this kind of attitude toward death is Job. Job was in a position to accept the final juncture of life happily, and having brought his life's journey to a smooth conclusion and completed his mission in life, he returned to be at the Creator's side.

5) Job's Pursuits and Gains in Life Allow Him to Calmly Face Death

In the scriptures it is written about Job: "So Job died, being old and full of days" (Job 42:17). This means that when Job passed away, he had no regrets and felt no pain, but departed naturally from this world. As everyone knows, Job was a man who feared God and shunned evil while he was alive. His deeds were commended by God and memorialized by others, and his life may be said to have had worth and significance that exceeded all others'. Job enjoyed God's blessings and was called righteous by Him on earth, and he was also tried by God and tested by Satan. He stood witness for God and deserved to be called a righteous person by Him. In the decades after he was tried by God, he lived a life that was even more valuable, meaningful, grounded, and peaceful

than before. Because of his righteous deeds, God tried him, and also because of his righteous deeds, God appeared to him and spoke to him directly. So, in the years after he was tried, Job understood and appreciated life's value in a more concrete way, attained a deeper understanding of the Creator's sovereignty, and gained a more precise and definite knowledge of how the Creator gives and takes away His blessings. The Book of Job records that Jehovah God bestowed even greater blessings upon Job than He did before, putting Job in an even better position to know the Creator's sovereignty and to face death calmly. So Job, when he grew old and faced death, certainly would not have been anxious about his property. He had no worries, nothing to regret, and of course did not fear death, for he spent all his life walking the way of fearing God and shunning evil. He had no reason to worry about his own end. How many people today could act in all the ways Job did when he confronted his own death? Why is no one capable of maintaining such a simple outward bearing? There is only one reason: Job lived his life in the subjective pursuit of belief, recognition, and submission to God's sovereignty, and it was with this belief, recognition, and submission that he passed through the important junctures in life, lived out his last years, and greeted his life's final juncture. Regardless of what Job experienced, his pursuits and goals in life were not painful, but happy. He was happy not only because of the blessings or commendation bestowed on him by the Creator, but more importantly, because of his pursuits and life goals, because of the growing knowledge and true understanding of the Creator's sovereignty he attained through fearing God and shunning evil, and moreover, because of his personal experience, as a subject of the Creator's sovereignty, of the wondrous deeds of God, and the tender yet unforgettable experiences and memories of man and God's coexistence, acquaintance, and mutual understanding. Job was happy because of the comfort and joy that came from knowing the Creator's will, and because of the reverence that arose after seeing that He is great, wondrous, lovable, and faithful. Job was able to face death without any suffering because he knew that, in dying, he would return to the Creator's side. It was his pursuits and gains in life that allowed him to face death calmly, allowed him to face the prospect of the Creator taking back his life calmly, and moreover, allowed him to stand unsullied and free from care before the Creator. Can people nowadays achieve the kind of happiness that Job possessed? Do you have the conditions necessary to do so? Since people nowadays do have these conditions, why are they unable to live happily, as Job did? Why are they unable to escape the suffering of the fear of death? When facing death, some people urinate uncontrollably; others shiver, faint, lash out against Heaven and man alike; some even wail and weep. These are by no means natural reactions that occur suddenly when death draws near. People behave in these embarrassing ways mainly because, deep in their hearts, they fear death, because they do not have a clear knowledge and appreciation of God's sovereignty and His arrangements, much less truly submit to them. People react in this way because they want nothing but to arrange and govern everything themselves, to

control their own fates, their own lives and deaths. It is no wonder, therefore, that people are never able to escape the fear of death.

6) Only by Accepting the Creator's Sovereignty Can One Return to His Side

When one does not have clear knowledge and experience of God's sovereignty and of His arrangements, one's knowledge of fate and of death will necessarily be incoherent. People cannot see clearly that everything rests in God's palm, do not realize that everything is subject to God's control and sovereignty, do not recognize that man cannot cast off or escape such sovereignty. For this reason, when their time comes to face death, there is no end to their last words, worries, and regrets. They are weighed down by so much baggage, so much reluctance, so much confusion. This causes them to fear death. For any person born into this world, birth is necessary and death inevitable; no one can rise above this course of things. If one wishes to depart from this world painlessly, if one wants to be able to face life's final juncture with no reluctance or worry, the only way is to leave no regrets. And the only way to depart without regrets is to know the Creator's sovereignty, to know His authority, and to submit to them. Only in this way can one stay far from human strife, from evil, from Satan's bondage, and only in this way can one live a life like Job's, guided and blessed by the Creator, a life that is free and liberated, a life with value and meaning, a life that is honest and openhearted. Only in this way can one submit, like Job, to the trials and deprivation of the Creator, to the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements. Only in this way can one worship the Creator all one's life and win His commendation, as Job did, and hear His voice, see Him appear. Only in this way can one live and die happily, like Job, with no pain, no worry, no regrets. Only in this way can one live in light, like Job, and pass every one of life's junctures in light, smoothly complete one's journey in light, successfully complete one's mission—to experience, learn, and come to know, as a created being, the Creator's sovereignty—and pass away in the light, and for ever after stand at the Creator's side as a created human being, commended by Him.

Do Not Miss the Opportunity to Know the Creator's Sovereignty

The six junctures described above are crucial phases laid out by the Creator, through which every normal person must pass in their life. From a human perspective, every one of these junctures is real, none can be circumvented, and all bear a relation to the Creator's predestination and sovereignty. So, for a human being, each of these junctures is an important checkpoint, and you now all face the serious question of how to pass through each of them successfully.

The several decades that make up a human life are neither long nor short. The twenty-odd years between birth and coming of age pass in the blink of an eye, and though at this point in life a person is considered an adult, people in this age group know next to nothing about human life and human fate. As they gain more experience, they

step gradually into middle age. People in their thirties and forties acquire a fledgling experience of life and fate, but their ideas about these things are still very vague. It is not until the age of forty that some people begin to understand mankind and the universe, which God created, and to grasp what human life is all about, what human fate is all about. Some people, though they have long been followers of God and are now middleaged, still cannot possess an accurate knowledge and definition of God's sovereignty, much less true submission. Some people care about nothing other than seeking to receive blessings, and though they have lived for many years, they do not know or understand in the least the fact of the Creator's sovereignty over human fate, and have not taken even the smallest step into the practical lesson of submitting to God's orchestrations and arrangements. Such people are thoroughly foolish, and their lives are lived in vain.

If the periods of a human life are divided according to people's degree of life experience and knowledge of human fate, they can roughly be broken into three phases. The first phase is youth, which is the years between birth and middle age, or from birth until the age of thirty. The second phase is maturation, from middle age to old age, or from thirty until sixty. And the third phase is one's mature period, which lasts with the start of old age, beginning at sixty, until one departs from the world. In other words, from birth to middle age, most people's knowledge of fate and life is limited to imitating the ideas of others, and has almost no real, practical substance. During this period, one's outlook on life and how one makes one's way in the world are quite superficial and naive. This is one's juvenile period. Only after one has tasted all the joys and sorrows of life does one gain a real understanding of fate, and—subconsciously, deep in one's heart gradually come to appreciate the irreversibility of fate, and slowly realize that the Creator's sovereignty over human fate truly exists. This is one's period of maturation. A person enters their mature period when they have ceased to struggle against fate, and when they are no longer willing to be drawn into strife and, instead, know their lot in life, submit to Heaven's will, summarize their achievements and errors in life, and await the Creator's judgment on their life. Considering the different experiences and acquisitions people obtain during these three periods, under normal circumstances, one's window of opportunity to know the Creator's sovereignty is not very large. If one lives to be sixty, one has only thirty years or so to know God's sovereignty; if one wants a longer period of time, that is only possible if one's life lasts long enough, if one is able to live for a century. So I say, according to the normal laws of human existence, though it is a very long process from when one first encounters the subject of knowing the Creator's sovereignty until the time when one is able to recognize the fact of that sovereignty, and from then until the point when one is able to submit to it, if one actually counts up the years, there are no more than thirty or forty during which one has the chance to gain these rewards. And often, people get carried away by their desires and their ambitions to receive blessings, so that they cannot discern where the essence of human life lies

and do not grasp the importance of knowing the Creator's sovereignty. Such people do not cherish this precious opportunity to enter into the human world to experience human life and the Creator's sovereignty, and they do not realize how precious it is for a created being to receive the Creator's personal guidance. So I say, those people who want God's work to end quickly, who wish God would arrange man's end as soon as possible so that they may immediately behold His real person and gain blessings as soon as possible they are guilty of the worst kind of disobedience and they are foolish in the extreme. Meanwhile, the wise among men, those possessed of the utmost mental acuity, are those who desire, during their limited time, to grasp this unique opportunity to know the Creator's sovereignty. These two different desires expose two vastly different outlooks and pursuits: Those who seek blessings are selfish and base and show no consideration for God's will, never seek to know God's sovereignty, never desire to submit to it, but simply want to live as they please. They are blithe degenerates, and it is this category of people that will be destroyed. Those who seek to know God are able to set aside their desires, are willing to submit to God's sovereignty and God's arrangement, and they try to be the kind of people who are submissive to God's authority and who satisfy God's desire. Such people live in the light and in the midst of God's blessings, and they will surely be commended by God. No matter what, human choice is useless, and humans have no say in how long God's work will take. It is better for people to put themselves at the mercy of God and submit to His sovereignty. If you do not put yourself at His mercy, what can you do? Will God suffer any loss as a result? If you do not put yourself at His mercy, but instead try to put yourself in charge, then you are making a foolish choice, and ultimately you will be the only one who suffers a loss. Only if people cooperate with God as soon as possible, only if they make haste to accept His orchestrations, know His authority, and understand all He has done for them, will they have hope. Only in this way will their lives not have been lived in vain, and will they attain salvation.

No One Can Change the Fact That God Holds Sovereignty Over Human Fate

After listening to everything I have just said, has your idea of fate changed? How do you understand the fact of God's sovereignty over human fate? To put it plainly, under God's authority, every person actively or passively accepts His sovereignty and His arrangements, and no matter how one struggles in the course of one's life, no matter how many crooked paths one walks, in the end one will return to the orbit of fate that the Creator has traced out for them. This is the insuperability of the Creator's authority and the manner in which His authority controls and governs the universe. It is this insuperability, this form of control and governance, that is responsible for the laws that dictate the lives of all things, that allow humans to reincarnate again and again without interference, that make the world turn regularly and move forward, day after day, year after year. You have witnessed all these facts and you understand them, whether

superficially or deeply, and the depth of your understanding depends on your experience and knowledge of the truth, and on your knowledge of God. How well you know the reality of the truth, how much you have experienced of God's words, how well you know God's essence and disposition—all of these represent the depth of your understanding of God's sovereignty and arrangements. Does the existence of God's sovereignty and arrangements depend on whether human beings submit to them? Is the fact that God possesses this authority determined by whether humanity submits to it? God's authority exists regardless of the circumstances. In all situations, God dictates and arranges every human fate and all things in accordance with His thoughts and His wishes. This will not change as a result of human change; it is independent of man's will, cannot be altered by any changes in time, space, and geography, for God's authority is His very essence. Whether man is able to know and accept God's sovereignty, and whether man is able to submit to it—neither of these considerations alters in the slightest the fact of God's sovereignty over human fate. That is to say, no matter what attitude man takes toward God's sovereignty, it simply cannot change the fact that God holds sovereignty over human fate and over all things. Even if you do not submit to God's sovereignty, He still commands your fate; even if you cannot know His sovereignty, His authority still exists. God's authority and the fact of God's sovereignty over human fate are independent of human will, and do not change in accordance with man's preferences and choices. God's authority is everywhere, at every hour, at every instant. Heaven and earth will pass away, but His authority will never pass away, for He is God Himself, He possesses unique authority, and His authority is not restricted or limited by people, events, or things, by space or by geography. At all times, God wields His authority, shows His might, continues His management work as He always has; at all times, He rules all things, provides for all things, orchestrates all things—just as He always has. No one can change this. It is fact; it has been the unchanging truth since time immemorial!

The Proper Attitude and Practice for One Who Wishes to Submit to God's Authority

With what attitude should man now know and regard God's authority and the fact of God's sovereignty over human fate? This is a real problem that stands before every person. When confronting real-life problems, how should you know and understand God's authority and His sovereignty? When you are faced with these problems and do not know how to understand, handle, and experience them, what attitude should you adopt to demonstrate your intention to submit, your desire to submit, and the reality of your submission to God's sovereignty and arrangements? First you must learn to wait; then you must learn to seek; then you must learn to submit. "Waiting" means waiting for the time of God, awaiting the people, events, and things that He has arranged for you, waiting for His will to reveal itself gradually to you. "Seeking" means observing and understanding God's thoughtful intentions for you through the people, events, and things

that He has laid out, understanding the truth through them, understanding what humans must accomplish and the ways they must adhere to, understanding what results God means to achieve in humans and what accomplishments He means to attain in them. "Submitting," of course, refers to accepting the people, events, and things that God has orchestrated, accepting His sovereignty and, through it, coming to know how the Creator dictates man's fate, how He supplies man with His life, how He works the truth within man. All things under God's arrangements and sovereignty obey natural laws, and if you resolve to let God arrange and dictate everything for you, you should learn to wait, you should learn to seek, and you should learn to submit. This is the attitude every person who wants to submit to God's authority must adopt, the basic quality every person who wants to accept God's sovereignty and arrangements must possess. To hold such an attitude, to possess such a quality, you must work harder. This is the only way you can enter into the true reality.

Accepting God as Your Unique Master Is the First Step in Attaining Salvation

The truths regarding God's authority are truths that every person must regard seriously, must experience and understand with their heart; for these truths have a bearing on every person's life; on every person's past, present, and future; on the crucial junctures through which every person must pass in life; on man's knowledge of God's sovereignty and the attitude with which one should face God's authority; and naturally, on every person's final destination. So, it takes a lifetime's worth of energy to know and understand them. When you look squarely at God's authority, when you accept His sovereignty, you will gradually come to realize and understand the truth of the existence of God's authority. But if you never recognize God's authority and never accept His sovereignty, then no matter how many years you live, you will not gain the slightest knowledge of God's sovereignty. If you do not truly know and understand God's authority, then when you reach the end of the road, even if you have believed in God for decades, you will have nothing to show for your life, and you will naturally not have the least knowledge of God's sovereignty over human fate. Is this not a very sad thing? So, no matter how far you have walked in life, no matter how old you are now, no matter how long the rest of your journey may be, first you must recognize God's authority and take it seriously, and accept the fact that God is your unique Master. Attaining clear, accurate knowledge and understanding of these truths regarding God's sovereignty over human fate is a mandatory lesson for everyone; it is the key to knowing human life and attaining the truth. Such is the life of knowing God, its basic course of study, that everyone must face each day, which no one can evade. If someone wishes to take shortcuts to reach this goal, then I tell you now, it is impossible! If you want to escape God's sovereignty, that is even less possible! God is man's only Lord, God is the only Master of human fate, and so it is impossible for man to dictate his own fate, impossible for him to step outside of it. No matter how great one's abilities, one cannot influence—much less orchestrate, arrange, control, or change—the fates of others. Only God Himself, the unique, dictates all things for man. Because only God Himself, the unique, possesses the unique authority that holds sovereignty over human fate, only the Creator is man's unique Master. God's authority holds sovereignty not only over created humanity, but also over non-created beings that no human can see, over the stars, over the cosmos. This is an indisputable fact, a fact that truly exists, which no person or thing can change. If one of you is still dissatisfied with things as they stand, believing you have some special skill or ability, and thinking still that by some stroke of luck you can change your present circumstances or otherwise escape them; if you attempt to change your own fate by means of human effort, and thereby distinguish yourself from your fellows and win fame and fortune; then I say to you, you are making things hard for yourself, you are only asking for trouble, you are digging your own grave! One day, sooner or later, you will discover you have made the wrong choice and your efforts have been wasted. Your ambition, your desire to struggle against fate, and your own egregious conduct will lead you down a road of no return, and for this you will pay a bitter price. Though at present you do not see the severity of the consequences, as you continue to experience and appreciate more deeply the truth that God is the Master of human fate, you will slowly come to realize what I speak of today and its real implications. Whether you truly have a heart and a spirit and whether you are a person who loves the truth depends on what kind of attitude you take toward God's sovereignty and toward the truth. Naturally, this determines whether you can truly know and understand God's authority. If you have never in your life sensed God's sovereignty and His arrangements, much less recognized and accepted God's authority, then you will be utterly worthless, and you will without a doubt be the object of God's loathing and rejection, due to the path you have taken and the choice you have made. But those who, in God's work, can accept His trial, accept His sovereignty, submit to His authority, and gradually gain real experience of His words will have attained real knowledge of God's authority, real understanding of His sovereignty; they will have truly become subject to the Creator. Only such people will have truly been saved. Because they have known God's sovereignty, because they have accepted it, their appreciation of the fact of God's sovereignty over human fate, their submission to it, is real and accurate. When they face death, they will have, like Job, a mind undaunted by death, and submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements in all things, with no individual choice, with no individual desire. Only such a person will be able to return to the Creator's side as a true, created human being.

December 17, 2013

God Himself, the Unique IV God's Holiness (I)

We had some further fellowship about God's authority during our last meeting. For now, we will not be discussing the topic of God's righteousness. What we will be talking about today is an entirely new topic—God's holiness. God's holiness is yet another aspect of God's unique essence, so it is crucial that we fellowship about this topic. I previously fellowshiped about two other aspects of God's essence—God's righteous disposition and God's authority; are these aspects, and the aspect about which I will be fellowshiping today, all unique? (Yes.) God's holiness is also unique, so the theme for our fellowship today will be what constitutes the basis and root of this uniqueness. Today we are going to fellowship about the unique essence of God—His holiness. Perhaps some of you have some misgivings, and are asking, "Why should we fellowship about God's holiness?" Worry not, I will talk you through it slowly. Once you have heard what I have to say, you will know why it is so necessary for Me to fellowship about this topic.

First, let us define the word "holy." Drawing on your perception and all the knowledge you have gained, what do you understand the definition of "holy" to be? ("Holy" means unstained, entirely without human corruption or flaws. Holiness radiates all things positive, whether in thought, speech or action.) Very good. ("Holy" is divine, untainted, unoffendable by man. It is unique, it is of God alone and it is His symbol.) This is your definition. In each person's heart, this word "holy" has a scope, a definition and an interpretation. At the very least, when you see the word "holy," your minds are not empty. You have a certain scope of definition for this word, and some people's sayings come somewhat close to sayings that define the essence of God's disposition. This is very good. Most people believe the word "holy" to be a positive one, and this is certainly true. But today, as we fellowship about the holiness of God, I will not merely be talking about definitions or explanations. Instead, I will present facts as proof to show you why I say God is holy, and why I use the word "holy" to describe the essence of God. By the time our fellowship is over, you will feel that the use of the word "holy" to define God's essence and in reference to God is fully justified and most appropriate. At the very least, in the context of current human language, using this word to refer to God is particularly apt—it alone of all the words of human language is an entirely fitting way to refer to God. This word, when used to refer to God, is not an empty word, nor is it a term of groundless praise or empty flattery. The purpose of our fellowship is to allow every person to recognize the truth of this aspect of God's essence. God does not fear man's understanding, but He fears his misunderstanding. God wishes for every person to know His essence and what He has and is. So every time we mention an aspect of God's essence, we can call on many facts to allow people to see that this aspect of God's essence does indeed exist.

Now that we have a definition of the word "holy," let us discuss some examples. In

people's notions, they imagine many things and people to be "holy." For example, virgin boys and girls are defined as holy in mankind's dictionaries. But are they actually holy? Are this so-called "holy" and the "holy" that we will fellowship about today one and the same? Those among men of sound morals, who have refined and cultured speech, who never hurt anyone, and who, by the words they speak, make others comfortable and agreeable—are they holy? Those who often do good, are charitable and provide great assistance to others, those who bring much enjoyment into people's lives—are they holy? Those who harbor no self-serving thoughts, who place no harsh demands on anyone, who are tolerant of everyone—are they holy? Those who have never quarreled with or taken advantage of anyone—are they holy? And what of those who work for the good of others, who benefit others and bring edification to others in every way—are they holy? Those who give all their life savings away to others and live a simple life, who are strict with themselves but treat others liberally—are they holy? (No.) You all remember how your mothers cared for you and looked after you in every conceivable way—are they holy? The idols you hold dear, whether they be famous people, celebrities or great men—are they holy? (No.) Let us look now at those prophets in the Bible who were able to tell things about the future that were unknown to many people—were these people holy? The people who were able to record God's words and the facts of His work in the Bible—were they holy? Was Moses holy? Was Abraham holy? (No.) How about Job? Was he holy? (No.) Job was called a righteous man by God, so why is even he said to be not holy? Are people who fear God and shun evil really not holy? Are they or not? (No.) You are a little apprehensive, you are not sure of the answer, and you do not dare to say "No," but neither do you dare to say "Yes," so in the end you half-heartedly say "No." Let Me ask another question. God's messengers—the messengers God sends down to earth—are they holy? Are angels holy? (No.) Mankind uncorrupted by Satan are they holy? (No.) You keep answering "No" to every question. On what basis? You are confused, are you not? So why are even angels said to be not holy? You feel apprehensive now, do you not? Can you work out on what basis the people, things or uncreated beings we mentioned previously are not holy? I am sure you are unable to. So isn't your saying "No" then a little irresponsible? Are you not answering blindly? Some people are wondering: "Since You have phrased Your question in this way, the answer must certainly be 'No." Do not give Me pat answers. Think carefully whether the answer is "Yes" or "No." You will know why the answer is "No" once we have fellowshiped about the following topic. I will give you the answer shortly. First, let us read from the scriptures.

1. Jehovah God's Command to Man

Gen 2:15–17 And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

2. The Serpent's Seduction of the Woman

Gen 3:1–5 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

These two passages are excerpts from the book of Genesis in the Bible. Are you all familiar with these two passages? They relate events that happened at the beginning, when mankind was first created; these events were real. First let us look at what kind of command Jehovah God gave to Adam and Eve; the content of this command is very important for our topic today. "And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." What is the import of God's command to man in this passage? Firstly, God tells man what he can eat, namely, the fruits of many kinds of trees. There is no danger and no poison; all can be eaten and eaten freely as man wishes, free from worry and doubt. This is one part of God's command. The other part is a warning. In this warning, God tells man he must not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What will happen if he eats from this tree? God told man: If you eat from it you will surely die. Are these words not straightforward? If God told you this but you did not understand why, would you treat His words as a rule or an order to be obeyed? Such words should be obeyed. But whether or not man is able to obey, God's words are unequivocal. God told man very clearly what he may eat and what he may not eat, and what will happen if he eats what he may not eat. In these brief words that God spoke, can you see anything of God's disposition? Are these words of God true? Is there any deception? Is there any falsity? Is there any intimidation? (No.) God honestly, truthfully and sincerely told man what he may eat and what he may not eat. God spoke clearly and plainly. Is there any hidden meaning in these words? Are these words not straightforward? Is there any need for conjecture? There is no need for guesswork. Their meaning is obvious at a glance. Upon reading them, one feels entirely clear about their meaning. That is, what God wants to say and what He wants to express comes from His heart. The things God expresses are clean, straightforward and clear. There are no covert motives, nor any hidden meanings. He speaks to man directly, telling him what he may eat and what he may not eat. That is to say, through these words of God, man can see that God's heart is transparent and true. There is no trace of falsehood here; it is not a case of telling you that you may not eat what is edible, or telling you "Do it and see what happens" with things that you cannot eat. This is not what God means. Whatever God thinks in His heart, that is what He says.

If I say God is holy because He shows and reveals Himself within these words in this way, you may feel that I have made a mountain out of a molehill or that I have stretched a point a little too far. If so, do not worry; we are not yet finished.

Let us now talk about "The Serpent's Seduction of the Woman." Who is the serpent? Satan. It plays the role of the foil in God's six-thousand-year management plan, and it is a role that we have to mention when we fellowship about the holiness of God. Why do I say this? If you do not know the evil and corruption of Satan, if you do not know of Satan's nature, then you have no way to acknowledge holiness, and nor can you know what holiness really is. In confusion, people believe that what Satan does is right, because they live within this kind of corrupt disposition. With no foil, with no point of comparison, you cannot know what holiness is. That is why Satan must be mentioned here. Such mention is no empty talk. Through Satan's words and deeds, we will see how Satan acts, how Satan corrupts mankind, and what is the nature and countenance of Satan. So what did the woman say to the serpent? The woman recounted to the serpent what Jehovah God had said to her. When she said these words, was she certain that what God had said to her was true? She could not be sure. As someone who was newly created, she had no ability to discern good from evil, and nor did she have any cognition about anything around her. Judging by the words she spoke to the serpent, she was not sure in her heart that God's words were right; such was her attitude. So when the serpent saw that the woman had an attitude of uncertainty toward God's words, it said: "You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Is there anything problematic within these words? When you read this sentence, do you gain a sense of the serpent's intentions? What are those intentions? It wanted to tempt this woman, to stop her from heeding God's words. But it did not say these things directly. Thus, we can say that it is very cunning. It expresses its meaning in a sly and evasive way in order to reach its intended objective, which it keeps concealed within its mind, hidden from man such is the serpent's cunning. This has always been Satan's way of speaking and acting. It says "not surely," without confirming one way or the other. But upon hearing this, this ignorant woman's heart was moved. The serpent was pleased, because its words had had the desired effect—such was the serpent's cunning intention. Furthermore, by promising an outcome that seems desirable to humans, it seduced her, saying, "In the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened." So she ponders: "To have my eyes opened is a good thing!" And then it said something even more enticing, words never before known to man, words that wield a great power of temptation over those who hear them: "You shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Are these words not powerfully seductive to man? It is like someone saying to you: "Your face is shaped wonderfully, except that the bridge of your nose is a little short. If you have that corrected, then you will be a world-class beauty!" Would these words move the heart of someone who had never previously harbored any desire to have cosmetic surgery? Are these

words not seductive? Is this seduction not tempting to you? And is this not a temptation? (Yes.) Does God say things like this? Was there any hint of this in the words of God that we just now perused? Does God say what He thinks in His heart? Can man see God's heart through His words? (Yes.) But when the serpent spoke those words to the woman, were you able to see its heart? No. And because of man's ignorance, man was easily seduced by the serpent's words and easily duped. So were you able to see Satan's intentions? Were you able to see the purpose behind what Satan said? Were you able to see Satan's plots and ruses? (No.) What kind of disposition is represented by Satan's way of speaking? What kind of essence have you seen in Satan through these words? Is it not insidious? Perhaps on the surface it smiles at you, or perhaps it reveals no expression whatsoever. But in its heart it is calculating how to obtain its objective, and it is this objective that you are unable to see. All the promises it makes to you, all the advantages it describes, are the guise of its seduction. You see these things as good, so you feel that what it says is more useful, more substantial than what God says. When this happens, does man not then become a submissive prisoner? Is this strategy that Satan has used not diabolical? You allow yourself to sink into degeneracy. Without Satan having to move a finger, but merely by speaking these two sentences, you become happy to follow along with Satan, to comply with Satan. Thus, Satan's objective has been attained. Is this intention not sinister? Is this not Satan's most primal countenance? From Satan's words, man can see its sinister motives, see its hideous countenance and see its essence. Is that not so? In comparing these sentences, without analysis you may perhaps feel as though Jehovah God's words are dull, commonplace and banal, that they do not justify waxing lyrical here in praise of God's honesty. However, when we take Satan's words and Satan's hideous countenance as a foil, do these words of God not carry significant weight for the people of today? (Yes.) Through this comparison, man can sense God's pure flawlessness. Every word Satan says, as well as Satan's motives, intentions and the way it speaks—they are all adulterated. What is the main feature of Satan's way of speaking? Satan uses equivocation to seduce you, without letting you see through its duplicity, nor does it allow you to discern its objective; Satan lets you take the bait, but you also have to praise and sing its merits. Is this ploy not Satan's habitual method of choice? (Yes.) Let us now look at what other words and expressions of Satan allow man to see its hideous countenance. Let us read some more from the scriptures.

3. Dialogue Between Satan and Jehovah God

Job 1:6–11 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan came also among them. And Jehovah said to Satan, From where come you? Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Does Job fear God for nothing? Have

not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.

Job 2:1–5 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan came also among them to present himself before Jehovah. And Jehovah said to Satan, From where come you? And Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? and still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved Me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.

These two passages consist entirely of a dialogue between God and Satan; they record what God said and what Satan said. God did not speak much, and He spoke very simply. Can we see the holiness of God within His simple words? Some will say this is not easily done. So can we see the hideousness of Satan in its replies? Let us first look at what kind of question Jehovah God asked of Satan. "From where come you?" Isn't this a straightforward question? Is there any hidden meaning? No; it is just a straightforward question. If I were to ask you: "Where do you come from?" how then would you answer? Is it a difficult question to answer? Would you say: "From going to and fro, and from walking up and down"? (No.) You would not answer like this. So, how then do you feel when you see Satan answering in this way? (We feel that Satan is being absurd, but also deceitful.) Can you tell what I am feeling? Every time I see these words of Satan, I feel disgusted, because Satan talks, and yet its words contain no substance. Did Satan answer God's question? No, the words Satan spoke were not an answer, they did not yield anything. They were not an answer to God's question. "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." What is your understanding of these words? Just where does Satan come from? Have you received an answer to this question? (No.) This is the "genius" of Satan's cunning schemes—not letting anyone discover what it is actually saying. Having heard these words you still cannot discern what it has said, even though it has finished answering. Yet Satan believes it has answered perfectly. How then do you feel? Disgusted? (Yes.) Now you begin to feel disgust in response to these words. Satan's words have a certain characteristic: What Satan says leaves you scratching your head, unable to perceive the source of its words. Sometimes Satan has motives and speaks deliberately, and sometimes governed by its nature, such words emerge spontaneously, and come straight out of Satan's mouth. Satan does not spend a long time weighing such words; rather, they are expressed without thinking. When God asked where it came from, Satan answered with a few ambiguous words. You feel very puzzled, never knowing exactly where Satan is from.

Are there any among you who speak like this? What kind of way is this to speak? (It is ambiguous and does not give a certain answer.) What kind of words should we use to describe this way of speaking? It is diversionary and misleading. Suppose someone does not want to let others know what they did yesterday. You ask them: "I saw you yesterday. Where were you going?" They do not tell you directly where they went. Rather, they say: "What a day it was yesterday. It was so tiring!" Did they answer your question? They did, but they did not give the answer you wanted. This is the "genius" within the artifice of man's speech. You can never discover what they mean, nor perceive the source or intention of their words. You do not know what they are trying to avoid because in their heart they have their own story—this is insidious. Are there any among you who also often speak in this way? (Yes.) What then is your purpose? Is it sometimes to protect your own interests, sometimes to maintain your own pride, position, and image, to protect the secrets of your private life? Whatever the purpose, it is inseparable from your interests, linked to your interests. Is this not the nature of man? All who have such a nature are closely related to Satan, if not its family. We can put it like this, can we not? Generally speaking, this manifestation is detestable and abhorrent. You also now feel disgusted, do you not? (Yes.)

Let's look at the following verses. Satan responds again to Jehovah's question, saying: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan is opening an attack on Jehovah's assessment of Job, and this attack is colored by hostility. "Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" This is Satan's understanding and assessment of Jehovah's work on Job. Satan assesses it like this, saying: "You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face." Satan always speaks ambiguously, but here it speaks in certain terms. However, these words, though they are spoken in certain terms, are an attack, a blasphemy and an act of defiance to Jehovah God, to God Himself. How do you feel when you hear these words? Do you feel aversion? Are you able to see through to Satan's intentions? First of all, Satan repudiates Jehovah's assessment of Job—a man who fears God and shuns evil. Then Satan repudiates everything Job says and does, that is, it repudiates his fear of Jehovah. Is this not accusatory? Satan is accusing, repudiating and doubting all Jehovah does and says. It does not believe, saying, "If You say things are like this, then how is it that I have not seen it? You have given him so many blessings, so how can he not fear You?" Is this not a repudiation of all that God does? Accusation, repudiation, blasphemy—are Satan's words not an assault? Are they not a true expression of what Satan thinks in its heart? These words are certainly not the same as the words we read just now: "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." They are completely different. Through these words, Satan completely lays bare the contents of its heart—its attitude toward God and its loathing of Job's fear of God. When this happens, its malice and evil nature are completely exposed.

It loathes those who fear God, loathes those who shun evil, and even more so loathes Jehovah for bestowing blessings on man. It wants to use this opportunity to destroy Job, whom God raised with His own hand, to ruin him, saying: "You say Job fears You and shuns evil. I see it differently." It uses various ways to provoke and tempt Jehovah, and uses various ploys so that Jehovah God hands Job over to Satan to be wantonly manipulated, harmed and mishandled. It wants to take advantage of this opportunity to destroy this man who is righteous and perfect in God's eyes. Is it just a momentary impulse that causes Satan to have this kind of heart? No, it is not. It has been long in the making. When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to dupe the person and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to obstruct God, using various evil ploys to tempt, disrupt and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God. Is this not Satan's sinister motive? You often say that Satan is so evil, so bad, but have you seen it? You can see how bad mankind is; you have not seen how bad the real Satan is. Yet in the matter of Job, you have clearly observed just how evil Satan is. This matter has made Satan's hideous countenance and its essence very clear. In warring with God, and trailing along behind Him, Satan's objective is to demolish all the work God wants to do, to occupy and control those whom God wants to gain, to completely extinguish those whom God wants to gain. If they are not extinguished, then they come to Satan's possession, to be used by it this is its objective. And what does God do? God says only a simple sentence in this passage; there is no record of anything more that God does, but we see there are many more records of what Satan does and says. In the following passage of scripture, Jehovah asks Satan, "From where come you?" What is Satan's answer? (It is still "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.") It is still that same sentence. This has become Satan's motto, Satan's calling card. How is this so? Is Satan not hateful? Surely it is enough to utter this disgusting sentence just once. Why does Satan keep repeating it? This proves one thing: Satan's nature is unchanging. Satan cannot use pretense to conceal its ugly face. God asks it a question and this is how it responds. Since this is so, imagine then how it must treat humans! Satan is not afraid of God, does not fear God, and does not obey God. So it dares to be wantonly presumptuous before God, to use these same words to brush off God's question, to repeatedly use this same answer to God's question, to attempt to use this answer to confound God—this is the ugly face of Satan. It does not believe in the almightiness of God, does not believe in the authority of God, and is certainly not willing to submit to the dominion of God. It is constantly in opposition to God, constantly attacking all that God does, attempting to wreck all that God does—this is its evil objective.

As recorded in the Book of Job, these two passages of speech uttered by Satan and the things Satan did are representative of its resistance to God in His six-thousand-year management plan—here, Satan's true colors are revealed. Have you seen Satan's words and deeds in real life? When you do see them, you may not think them to be things spoken by Satan, but instead think them to be things spoken by man. What is represented, when such things are spoken by man? Satan is represented. Even if you recognize it, you still cannot perceive that it is really being spoken by Satan. But here and now you have unequivocally seen what Satan itself has said. You now have an unequivocal, crystal-clear understanding of the hideous countenance and the evil of Satan. So are these two passages spoken by Satan of value in helping people today to gain knowledge about Satan's nature? Are these two passages worth carefully retaining in order for mankind today to be able to recognize Satan's hideous face, to recognize Satan's original, true face? Although this may not seem like an appropriate thing to say, these words, expressed thus, can nonetheless be considered accurate. Indeed, this is the only way that I can express this idea, and if you can understand it, then that is enough. Again and again, Satan attacks the things Jehovah does, throwing out accusations about Job's fear of Jehovah God. Satan attempts to provoke Jehovah by various methods, trying to get Jehovah to condone its temptation of Job. Its words therefore have a highly provocative nature. So tell Me, once Satan has spoken these words, can God clearly see what Satan wants to do? (Yes.) In God's heart, this man Job that God looks upon—this servant of God, that God takes to be a righteous man, a perfect man—can he withstand this kind of temptation? (Yes.) Why is God so certain about that? Is God always examining the heart of man? (Yes.) So is Satan able to examine the heart of man? Satan cannot. Even if Satan could see your heart, its evil nature would never let it believe that holiness is holiness, or that sordidness is sordidness. The evil Satan can never treasure anything that is holy, righteous or bright. Satan cannot help tirelessly acting in accordance with its nature, its evil, and through its habitual methods. Even at the cost of itself being punished or destroyed by God, it does not hesitate to stubbornly oppose God—this is evil, this is the nature of Satan. So in this passage, Satan says: "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." Satan thinks that man's fear of God is due to man having obtained so many advantages from God. Man obtains advantages from God, so he says God is good. But it is not because God is good, it is only because man obtains so many advantages that he can fear God in this way. Once God deprives him of these advantages, he then abandons God. In Satan's evil nature, it does not believe that man's heart can truly fear God. Because of its evil nature, it does not know what holiness is, much less what fearful reverence is. It does not know what it is to obey God or what it is to fear God. Because it does not know these things, it thinks that man cannot fear God either. Tell Me, is Satan not evil? Excepting our church, none of the various religions and denominations, or

religious and social groups, believe in the existence of God, much less do they believe that God has become flesh and is doing the work of judgment, so they think that what you believe in is not God. A promiscuous man looks around him and sees everyone else as promiscuous, just as he is. A mendacious man looks around and sees only dishonesty and lies. An evil man sees everyone else as evil and wants to fight everyone he sees. Those with a measure of honesty see everyone else as honest, so they are always duped, always cheated, and there is nothing they can do about it. I give these few examples to fortify you in your conviction: Satan's evil nature is not a fleeting compulsion or determined by circumstances, nor is it a temporary manifestation arising from any reason or contextual factors. Absolutely not! Satan just cannot help but be this way! It can do nothing good. Even when it says something pleasant to hear, it is just to seduce you. The more pleasant, the more tactful, the more gentle its words are, the more malicious the sinister intentions behind these words. What kind of face, what kind of nature does Satan show in these two passages? (Insidious, malicious and evil.) Satan's primary characteristic is evil; above all else, Satan is evil and malicious.

Now that we have finished our discussion of Satan, let us return to talking about our God. During God's six-thousand-year management plan, very little of God's direct speech was recorded in the Bible, and that which has been recorded is very simple. So let us start at the beginning. God created man and since then has ever guided the life of mankind. Whether in bestowing upon mankind blessings, creating laws and commandments for men, or stipulating the various rules for life, do you know what God's intended aim is in doing these things? Firstly, can you say with certainty that all that God does is for the good of mankind? These may seem to you like grand, hollow words, but upon examining the details within, is not everything that God does intended to lead and guide man toward living a normal life? Whether it be causing man to abide by His rules or to keep His laws, God's aim is for man not to fall into worshiping Satan and not to be harmed by Satan; this is most fundamental, and this is what was done in the very beginning. At the very beginning, when man did not understand God's will, God made some simple laws and rules and made regulations that covered every conceivable matter. These regulations are simple, yet within them they contain God's will. God treasures, cherishes and dearly loves mankind. So can we say that His heart is holy? Can we say His heart is clean? (Yes.) Does God have any additional motives? (No.) So is this aim of His right and positive? In the course of God's work, all of the regulations He has made have a positive effect on man, leading the way for man. So are there any self-serving thoughts in God's mind? Does God have any additional aims where man is concerned? Does God want to make use of man in some way? Not in the slightest. God does as He says, and His words and actions are matched by His thoughts in His heart. There is no tainted purpose, no self-serving thoughts. Nothing He does is for Himself; all that He does, He does for man, without any private objectives. Although He has plans and intentions, which He places upon man, none of it is for Himself. Everything He does

is done purely for mankind, to protect mankind, to keep mankind from being led astray. So is this heart of His not precious? Can you see even the tiniest sign of such a precious heart in Satan? You cannot see the slightest hint of this in Satan, you cannot see it at all. Everything God does is revealed naturally. Now, let us look at the way God works; how does He do His work? Does God take these laws and His words and bind them tightly around the head of every person, like the band-tightening spell, a imposing them on each and every human being? Does He work in this way? (No.) So in what way does God do His work? Does He threaten? Does He beat about the bush when He speaks to you? (No.) When you do not understand the truth, how does God guide you? He shines a light on you, telling you clearly that doing this is not in keeping with the truth, and then He tells you what you should do. From these ways in which God works, what kind of relationship do you feel you have with God? Do you feel that God is beyond reach? (No.) So how do you feel when you see these ways in which God works? God's words are especially real, and His relationship with man especially normal. God is exceptionally close to you; there is no distance between you and God. When God guides you, when He provides for you, helps you and supports you, you feel how amiable God is, the reverence He inspires; you feel how lovely He is, you feel His warmth. But when God reproaches you with corruption, or when He judges and disciplines you for rebelling against Him, what method does He use? Does He reproach you with words? Does He discipline you through your environment and through people, affairs, and things? (Yes.) To what extent does God discipline you? Does God discipline man to the same degree that Satan harms man? (No, God disciplines man only to the extent that man can endure.) God works in a gentle, delicate, loving and caring way, a way that is extraordinarily measured and proper. His way does not provoke in you intense emotional reactions such as: "God must let me do this" or "God must let me do that." God never gives you that kind of mental or emotional intensity that makes things unbearable. Is that not so? Even when you accept God's words of judgment and chastisement, how do you feel then? When you sense the authority and power of God, how do you feel then? Do you feel that God is divine and inviolable? Do you feel distance between yourself and God at these times? Do you feel the fear of God? No—rather, you feel fearful reverence toward God. Is it not because of God's work that people feel all of these things? Would they have these feelings if it were Satan who was at work? Absolutely not. God uses His words, His truth and His life to continuously provide for man, to support man. When man is weak, when man is feeling dispirited, God certainly does not speak harshly, saying: "Do not feel dispirited. What is there to be dispirited about? Why are you weak? What

a. The "band-tightening spell" is a spell used by the monk Tang Sanzang in the Chinese novel Journey to the West. He uses this spell to control Sun Wukong by tightening a metal band around the latter's head, giving him acute headaches, and thus bringing him under control. It has become a metaphor to describe something that binds a person.

reason is there to be weak? You are always so weak, and you are always so negative! What is the use of you being alive? Just die and have done with it!" Does God work in this way? (No.) Does God have the authority to act in this way? Yes, He does. Yet God does not act in this way. The reason why God does not act in this way is because of His essence, the essence of the holiness of God. His love for man, His treasuring and cherishing of man cannot be expressed clearly in just one or two sentences. It is not something that is brought about by man's boasting but is something that God brings forth in actual practice; it is the revelation of God's essence. Can all these ways in which God works cause man to see the holiness of God? In all of these ways in which God works, including God's good intentions, including the effects God wishes to work on man, including the different ways God adopts to work on man, the kind of work He does, what He wants man to understand—have you seen any evil or deceitfulness in God's good intentions? (No.) So in everything God does, everything God says, everything He thinks in His heart, as well as all the essence of God that He reveals—can we call God holy? (Yes.) Has any man ever seen this holiness in the world, or within himself? Apart from God, have you ever seen it in any human being, or in Satan? (No.) Based on our discussion thus far, can we call God the unique, the holy God Himself? (Yes.) All that God gives to man, including the words of God, the different ways in which God works on man, what God tells man, what God reminds man of, what He advises and encourages it all originates from one essence: the holiness of God. If there were no such holy God, no man could take His place to do the work He does. If God had handed these men entirely over to Satan, have you ever considered what kind of condition all of you would be in today? Would you all be sitting here, whole and inviolate? Would you also say: "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it"? Would you be so brazen, so cock-sure and full of swagger as to speak such words and boast without shame before God? You absolutely would, without a shadow of doubt! Satan's attitude toward man allows man to see that Satan's nature and essence are utterly different from God's. What is it about the essence of Satan that is the opposite of the holiness of God? (Satan's evil.) Satan's evil nature is the opposite of the holiness of God. The reason why the majority of people do not recognize this revelation of God's and this essence of God's holiness is because they live under the domain of Satan, within the corruption of Satan and within Satan's living enclosure. They do not know what holiness is, or how to define holiness. Even when you perceive the holiness of God, you still cannot define it as being the holiness of God with any certainty. This is a disparity within man's knowledge of the holiness of God.

What characterizes Satan's work on man? You should be able to learn this through your own experiences—it is Satan's archetypal feature, the thing it repeatedly does, the thing it tries to do with every single person. Perhaps you cannot see this feature, so you do not feel that Satan is so frightful and hateful. Does anyone know what this feature is? (It seduces, entices and tempts man.) That is correct; these are several ways in which

this feature manifests. Satan also deludes, attacks and accuses man—these are all manifestations. Are there any more? (It tells lies.) Cheating and lying come most naturally to Satan. It often does these things. There's also bossing people about, inciting them, forcing them to do things, ordering them about, and forcefully taking possession of them. Now I will describe something to you that will make your hair stand on end, but I do not do it to scare you. God works on man and cherishes man both in His attitude and in His heart. Satan, on the other hand, does not cherish man at all, and it spends all its time thinking about how to harm man. Is this not so? When it is thinking about harming man, is its state of mind one of urgency? (Yes.) So, as regards Satan's work on man, I have two phrases that can amply describe the evil and maliciousness of Satan, that can truly allow you to know the hatefulness of Satan: In Satan's approach to man, it always wants to forcefully occupy and possess man, each and every one, to the extent that it can gain complete control of man and harm man grievously, so that it can achieve its objective and fulfill its wild ambition. What does "forcefully occupy" mean? Is it something that happens with your consent, or without your consent? Does it happen with your knowing, or without your knowing? The answer is that it happens completely without your knowing! It happens in situations where you are unaware, perhaps without it even saying or doing anything to you, with no premise, no context—there Satan is, circling around you, surrounding you. It looks for an opportunity to exploit and then it forcefully occupies you, possesses you, achieving its objective of gaining complete control of you and of inflicting harm upon you. This is a most typical intention and behavior of Satan as it struggles to wrest mankind away from God. How do you feel when you hear this? (Terrified and fearful in our hearts.) Do you feel disgusted? (Yes.) As you feel this disgust, do you think that Satan is shameless? When you think that Satan is shameless, do you then feel disgusted with those people around you who always want to control you, those with wild ambitions for status and interests? (Yes.) So what methods does Satan use to forcefully possess and occupy man? Are you clear on this? When you hear these two terms "forceful occupation" and "possession," you feel disgust and you can sense the evil about these words. Without either your consent or your knowledge, Satan possesses you, forcibly occupies you, and corrupts you. What can you taste in your heart? Do you feel loathing and disgust? (Yes.) When you feel this loathing and disgust for these ways of Satan, what kind of feeling do you have for God? (Gratitude.) Gratitude to God for saving you. So now, at this moment, do you have the desire or the will to let God take over and control all that you have and you are? (Yes.) In what context do you answer thus? Do you say "yes" because you are afraid of being forcefully occupied and possessed by Satan? (Yes.) You must not have this kind of mentality; it is not right. Do not be afraid, for God is here. There is nothing to be afraid of. Once you have understood the evil essence of Satan, you should have a more accurate understanding or a deeper cherishment of God's love, God's good intentions, God's compassion and tolerance for man and His righteous disposition. Satan is so hateful, yet if this still does not inspire

your love of God and your reliance on and trust in God, then what kind of person are you? Are you willing to let Satan harm you so? After seeing the evil and hideousness of Satan, we turn around and look then at God. Has your knowledge of God now undergone any change? Can we say that God is holy? Can we say that God is flawless? "God is unique holiness"—can God live up to this designation? (Yes.) So in the world and among all things, isn't it only God Himself that can live up to this understanding that man has of God? (Yes.) So what exactly does God give to man? Does He only give you a little care, concern and consideration without your being aware of it? What has God given to man? God has given life to man, given man everything, and bestows all this on man unconditionally without demanding anything, without any ulterior motive. He uses the truth, His words, and His life to lead and guide man, bringing man away from the harm of Satan, away from Satan's temptations and inducements, allowing man to see clearly through Satan's evil nature and hideous face. Is God's love and concern for mankind true? Is it something that every one of you can experience? (Yes.)

Look back on your lives until now, at all the work God has done on you in all the years of your faith. Whether the feelings this evokes for you are deep or shallow, is this not the thing that was most necessary of all for you? Was it not what you most needed to obtain? (Yes.) Is this not truth? Is this not life? (Yes.) Has God ever bestowed enlightenment upon you, and then asked you to give anything to Him in return for all that He has given to you? (No.) So what is God's purpose? Why does God do this? Does God have the objective of occupying you? (No.) Does God want to ascend His throne within the heart of man? (Yes.) So what is the difference between God ascending His throne and Satan's forceful occupation? God wants to gain the heart of man, He wants to occupy the heart of man—what does this mean? Does it mean that God wants man to become His puppets, His machines? (No.) So what is God's purpose? Is there a difference between God wanting to occupy the heart of man and Satan's forceful occupation and possession of man? (Yes.) What is the difference? Can you tell Me clearly? (Satan does it through force whereas God lets man volunteer.) Is this the difference? What use does God have for your heart? And what use does God have for occupying you? How in your hearts do you understand "God occupies man's heart"? We must be fair in how we talk about God here, otherwise people will always misunderstand, and think: "God always wants to occupy me. What does He want to occupy me for? I do not want to be occupied, I just want to be my own master. You say Satan occupies people, but God also occupies people. Isn't it the same either way? I do not want to let anyone occupy me. I am myself!" What is the difference here? Give it some thought. I ask you, is "God occupies man" an empty phrase? Does God's occupation of man mean that He lives in your heart and controls your every word and every move? If He tells you to sit, do you dare not stand? If He tells you to go east, do you dare not go west? Does this "occupation" refer to something along these lines? (No, it does not. God wants man to live out what God has and is.) Through these years that God has managed man, in

His work on man up until now in this last stage, what has been the intended effect on man of all the words He has spoken? Is it that man lives out what God has and is? Looking at the literal meaning of "God occupies man's heart," it seems as if God takes man's heart and occupies it, lives in it and does not come out again; He becomes the master of man and is able to dominate and manipulate man's heart at will, so that man must do whatever God tells him to do. In this sense, it would seem as though every person could become God and possess His essence and disposition. So in this case, could man also perform the deeds of God? Can "occupation" be explained in this way? (No.) So what is it? I ask you this: Are all the words and truth that God supplies to man a revelation of the essence of God and what He has and is? (Yes.) This is certainly true. But is it essential that God Himself practice and possess all of the words that He supplies to man? Give this some thought. When God judges man, why does He judge? How did these words come into being? What is the content of these words that God speaks when He judges man? What are they based on? Is it man's corrupt disposition upon which they are based? (Yes.) So is the effect achieved by God's judgment of man based on the essence of God? (Yes.) So is God's "occupation of man" an empty phrase? It certainly is not. So why does God say these words to man? What is His purpose in saying these words? Does He want to use these words to serve as the life of man? (Yes.) God wants to use all of this truth that He has spoken in these words to act as the life of man. When man takes all of this truth and the word of God and transforms them into his own life, can man then obey God? Can man then fear God? Can man then shun evil? When man has reached this point, can he then obey God's sovereignty and arrangement? Is man then in a position to submit to the authority of God? When people like Job, or like Peter, reach the end of their road, when their life can be considered to have reached maturity, when they have a real understanding of God—can Satan then still lead them away? Can Satan then still occupy them? Can Satan still forcefully possess them? (No.) So what kind of person is this? Is this someone who has been completely gained by God? (Yes.) At this level of meaning, how do you see this kind of person who has been completely gained by God? From God's perspective, under these circumstances, He has already occupied this person's heart. But what does this person feel? Is it that the word of God, God's authority, and God's way, become life within man, that this life then occupies man's entire being, making the things that he lives out as well as his essence adequate to satisfy God? From God's perspective, is mankind's heart at this very moment occupied by Him? (Yes.) How do you understand this level of meaning now? Is it God's Spirit that occupies you? (No, it is the word of God that occupies us.) It is the way of God and the word of God that have become your life, and it is the truth that has become your life. At this time, man then possesses the life that comes from God, but we cannot say that this life is God's life. In other words, we cannot say that the life man should derive from the word of God is God's life. So no matter how long man follows God, no matter how many words man obtains from God, man can never become God.

Even if one day God said, "I have occupied your heart, you now possess My life," would you then feel that you are God? (No.) What would you then become? Would you not have an absolute obedience to God? Would your heart not be filled with the life God has bestowed on you? This would be a very normal manifestation of what happens when God occupies man's heart. This is fact. So looking at it from this aspect, can man become God? When man is able to live out the reality of the words of God, and becomes someone who fears God and shuns evil, can man then possess the life essence and holiness of God? Absolutely not. No matter what happens, man is still man when all is said and done. You are a being of creation; when you have received the word of God from God and received God's way, you only possess the life that comes from the words of God, you become someone who is praised by God, but you will never possess the life essence of God, much less the holiness of God.

Now we will return to the topic that we just discussed. During this discussion, I asked you a question—is Abraham holy? Is Job holy? (No.) This "holiness" represents the essence and disposition of God, and man is far lacking. Man does not have God's essence or God's disposition. Even when man has experienced all of God's words and has become equipped with their reality, man can still never possess God's holy essence; man is man. You understand, yes? So what is your understanding now of this phrase: "God occupies man's heart"? (It is God's words, God's way and His truth that become man's life.) You have memorized these words. I hope you will have a deeper understanding. Some people may ask, "So why say that God's messengers and angels are not holy?" What do you think about this question? Perhaps you have not considered it before. I will use a simple example: When you turn on a robot, it can both dance and talk, and you can understand what it says. You may call it cute and vivacious, but it will not understand because it does not have life. When you turn off its power supply, can it still move about? When this robot is activated, you can see that it is vivacious and cute. You make an evaluation of it, whether it be essential or superficial, but whatever the case, you can see it moving. But when you turn off its power supply, do you see any kind of personality in it? Do you see it possessing any kind of essence? Do you understand the meaning of what I am saying? That is to say, even though this robot can move and stop, you could never describe it as having any kind of essence. Is this not a fact? Now, we will not talk any more on this. It is enough for you to have a general understanding of the meaning. Let us end our fellowship here. Goodbye!

December 17, 2013

God Himself, the Unique V God's Holiness (II)

Today, brothers and sisters, let us sing a hymn. Find one you like and that you sing regularly. (We'll sing hymn No. 760 of God's words, "Pure Love Without Blemish.")

- 1 "Love" refers to an emotion that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and nothing impure. If you love, then you will not deceive, complain, betray, rebel, exact, or seek to gain something or to gain a certain amount.
- 2 "Love" refers to an emotion that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and nothing impure. If you love, then you will gladly dedicate yourself, will gladly suffer hardship, you will be compatible with Me, you will forsake all that you have for Me, you will give up your family, your future, your youth, and your marriage. If not, your love would not be love at all, but deceit and betrayal!

—Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs

This hymn was a good choice. Do you all enjoy singing it? What do you feel after singing it? Are you able to feel this kind of love within yourselves? (Not yet.) Which of its words move you most deeply? (In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and nothing impure. But within myself I still see many impurities, and many parts of me that try to make deals with God. I really haven't attained a kind of love that is pure and unblemished.) If you have not attained a pure, unblemished love, what is the degree of your love, then? (I am merely at the stage where I am willing to seek, where I am yearning.) Based on your own stature and speaking from your own experience, what degree have you attained? Do you have deceit? Do you have complaints? Do you have demands within your heart? Are there things you want and desire from God? (Yes, I have these tainted things within.) In what circumstances do they come out? (When the situation that God has arranged for me doesn't match up with my notions, or when my desires have not been met: in such moments, I reveal this kind of corrupt disposition.) You brothers and sisters who come from Taiwan, do you often sing this hymn, too? Can you talk a little about how you understand "pure love without blemish"? Why does God define love in this way? (I like this hymn very much because I can see from it that this love is a complete love. However, I still have quite a ways to go to meet that standard, and I am still very far from attaining true love. There are some things in which I have been able to make progress and cooperate through the strength His words give me and through prayer. However, when faced with certain trials or revelations, I feel I don't have

a future or a destiny, that I don't have a destination. At such moments, I feel very weak, and this issue often disturbs me.) What ultimately are you referring to when you say "future and destiny"? Is there something specific you are referring to? Is it a picture or something you imagined, or is your future and destiny a thing you can actually see? Is it a real object? I want each one of you to think about it: To what does the concern you have for your future and your destiny refer? (It's being able to be saved so that I can survive.) You other brothers and sisters, you too talk a little about your understanding of "pure love without blemish." (When a person has it, there is no impurity coming from their own individual self, and they are not controlled by their future and destiny. Regardless of how God treats them, they are able to fully obey God's work and His orchestrations, and to follow Him to the very end. Only this kind of love for God is pure and unblemished love. In measuring myself against it, I have discovered that, though I appear to have expended of myself or cast aside certain things in the last few years of believing in God, I have not been truly able to give my heart to Him. When God exposes me, I feel I can't be saved, and I dwell in a negative state. I see myself performing my duty, but at the same time I'm trying to make deals with God, I'm unable to love God with all my heart, and my destination, my future, and my destiny are always on my mind.) It seems that you have gained some comprehension of this hymn, and have made some connections between it and your actual experience. However, you have different degrees of acceptance of each of the phrases in the hymn, "Pure Love Without Blemish." Some people think it is about willingness, some people are seeking to cast their future aside, some people are seeking to let go of their families, and some people are not seeking to receive anything. Still others are requiring themselves to have no deceit, no complaints, and to not rebel against God. Why would God want to suggest this kind of love and require that people love Him in this way? Is this a type of love that people can attain? That is to say, are people able to love this way? People may see that they cannot, because they do not possess any hint of this type of love. When people do not possess it, and when they fundamentally do not know about love, God speaks these words, and these words are unfamiliar to them. Since people live in this world and in a corrupt disposition, if people had this type of love or if a person could possess this type of love, love that makes no requests and no demands, a love with which they are willing to devote themselves and endure suffering and give up everything they own, then what would other people think of someone who possesses this type of love? Would such a person not be perfect? (Yes.) Does a perfect person like that exist in this world? This type of person does not exist at all in this world. This is absolute. Therefore, some people, through their experiences, expend great effort to measure themselves against these words. They deal with themselves, restrain themselves, and they even constantly forsake themselves: They endure suffering and make themselves give up their notions. They give up their rebelliousness, and their own desires and wants. But in the end they still cannot measure up. Why does that happen? God says these things to provide a

standard for people to follow, so people will know the standard demanded by God for them. But does God ever say that people must achieve this right away? Does God ever say how much time people have to achieve this? (No.) Does God ever say that people have to love Him this way? Does this passage of text say that? No, it does not. God is just telling people about the love He was referring to. As for whether people are able to love God this way and treat God this way, what are God's requirements of men? It is not necessary to reach them instantly, because that would be beyond people's capabilities. Have you ever thought about what sort of conditions people need to meet in order to love this way? If people frequently read these words will they gradually have this love? (No.) What are the conditions, then? First, how can people be free from suspicions about God? (Only honest people can achieve this.) What about being free from deceit? (They also have to be honest people.) What about being someone who does not make deals with God? That is also part of being an honest person. What about being free of cunning? What does it mean to say there is no choice in love? Do all of these things come back to being an honest person? There are a lot of details in here. What does it prove that God is able to speak about and define this type of love in this way? Can we say that God possesses this kind of love? (Yes.) Where do you see this? (In the love God has for man.) Is God's love for man conditional? Are there barriers or distance between God and man? Does God have suspicions about man? (No.) God observes man and understands man; He truly understands man. Is God deceitful toward man? (No.) Since God speaks so perfectly of this love, could His heart or His essence also be so perfect? (Yes.) Without a doubt, they are; when people's experiencing has reached a certain point, they can feel this. Have people ever defined love in this way? In what circumstances has man defined love? How does man speak of love? Does man not speak of love in terms of giving or offering? (Yes.) This definition of love is simplistic; it lacks essence.

God's definition of love and the way God speaks of love are connected to an aspect of His essence, but which aspect is it? Last time we fellowshiped about a very important subject, a subject that people have often discussed before. This subject consists of a word that is often spoken about in the course of believing in God, and yet it is a word with which everyone feels both familiar and unfamiliar. Why do I say this? It is a word that comes from the languages of man; however, among man its definition is both distinct and vague. What is this word? (Holiness.) Holiness: that was our topic the last time we fellowshiped. We fellowshiped about one part of this topic. Through our last fellowship, did everyone gain some new understanding about the essence of God's holiness? What aspects of this understanding do you consider to be entirely new? That is, what is it within this understanding or within those words that made you feel that your understanding of God's holiness was different or varied from God's holiness as I spoke about it during fellowship? Do you have any impressions about this? (God says what He feels in His heart; His words are untainted. This is a manifestation of one aspect of

holiness.) (There is also holiness when God is wrathful toward man; His wrath is without blemish.) (As for God's holiness, I understand that there is both God's wrath and His mercy within His righteous disposition. This left a very strong impression on me. In our last fellowship, it was also mentioned that God's righteous disposition is unique—I did not understand this in the past. Only after hearing what God had fellowshiped did I understand that God's wrath is different from human anger. God's wrath is a positive thing and it is principled; it is sent forth due to the inherent essence of God. God sees something negative, and so He releases His wrath. This is something not possessed by any created being.) Our topic today is God's holiness. People have all heard and learned something about God's righteous disposition. Furthermore, many people often talk about God's holiness and God's righteous disposition in the same breath; they say that God's righteous disposition is holy. The word "holy" is certainly not unfamiliar to anyone—it is a commonly used word. But in regard to the meanings within that word, what expressions of God's holiness are people able to see? What has God revealed that people can recognize? I am afraid this is something that no one knows. God's disposition is righteous, but then if you take God's righteous disposition and say that it is holy, that seems a little vague, a little garbled; why is this? You say God's disposition is righteous, or you say His righteous disposition is holy, so in your hearts how do you characterize God's holiness, how do you understand it? That is to say, what about what God has revealed, or what He has and is, would people recognize as holy? Have you thought about this before? What I have seen is that people often come out with commonly used words or have phrases that have been said over and over again, yet they do not even know what they are saying. That is just how everyone says it, and they say it habitually, so it becomes a set term for them. However, if they were to investigate and really study the details, they would find that they do not know what the real meaning is or what it refers to. Just like the word "holy," no one knows exactly what aspect of God's essence is being referred to in regard to His holiness that they speak of, and no one knows how to reconcile the word "holy" with God. People are confused in their hearts, and their recognition of God's holiness is vague and unclear. As for how God is holy, no one is quite clear. Today we will fellowship on this topic in order to reconcile the word "holy" with God so that people can see the actual content of the essence of God's holiness. This will prevent some people from habitually and carelessly using this word and saying things randomly when they do not know what they mean or whether they are correct and accurate. People have always spoken like this; you have, he has, and thus it has become a habit of speech. This inadvertently tarnishes such a term.

On the surface, the word "holy" seems very easy to understand, does it not? At the very least people believe the word "holy" to mean clean, unsoiled, sacred, and pure. There are also those who associate "holiness" with "love" in the hymn "Pure Love Without Blemish" which we sang just now. This is correct; this is one part of it. God's love is part of His essence, but it is not the entirety of it. However, in people's notions, they see the

word and tend to associate it with things that they themselves view as pure and clean, or with things they personally think are unsoiled or unblemished. For example, some people said the lotus flower is clean, and that it blooms unblemished from dirty mud. So people began to apply the word "holy" to the lotus flower. Some people see fabricated love stories as holy, or they might view some fictional, awe-inspiring characters as holy. Furthermore, some consider people from the Bible, or others recorded in spiritual books—such as saints, apostles, or others who once followed God while He did His work—as having had spiritual experiences that were holy. These are all things that were conceived of by people; they are notions held by people. Why do people hold notions like this? The reason is very simple: It is because people live amongst corrupt disposition and dwell in a world of evil and filth. Everything they see, everything they touch, everything they experience is Satan's evil and corruption as well as the scheming, infighting, and war that occur among people under the influence of Satan. Therefore, even when God performs His work in people, and even when He speaks to them and reveals His disposition and essence, they are not able to see or know God's holiness and essence. People often say that God is holy, but they lack true understanding; they are just saying empty words. Because people live among filth and corruption and are in the domain of Satan, and they do not see the light, know nothing of positive matters, and furthermore, do not know the truth, no one truly knows what "holy" means. So, are there any holy things or holy people among this corrupt humanity? We can say with certainty: No, there are not, because only God's essence is holy.

Last time, we fellowshiped about one aspect of how God's essence is holy. This provided some inspiration for people to gain knowledge of God's holiness, but it is not enough. It cannot sufficiently enable people to fully know God's holiness, nor can it sufficiently enable them to understand that God's holiness is unique. Furthermore, it cannot sufficiently enable people to understand the true meaning of holiness that is fully embodied in God. Therefore, it is necessary that we continue our fellowship on this subject. Last time, our fellowship addressed three topics, so we should now discuss the fourth. We will begin by reading from the Scriptures.

The Temptation of Satan

Mat 4:1–4 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If You be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

These are the words with which the devil first tried to tempt the Lord Jesus. What is the content of what the devil said? ("If You be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.") These words that the devil spoke are quite simple, but is there

a problem with their essence? The devil said, "If You be the Son of God," but in its heart, did it or did it not know that Jesus was the Son of God? Did it or did it not know that He was Christ? (It knew.) Then why did it say "If You be"? (It was trying to tempt God.) But what was its purpose in doing so? It said, "If You be the Son of God." In its heart it knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, it was very clear about this in its heart, but despite knowing this, did it submit to Him and worship Him? (No.) What did it want to do? It wanted to use this method and these words to anger the Lord Jesus, and then fool Him into acting in line with its intentions. Was this not the meaning behind the devil's words? In Satan's heart, it clearly knew that this was the Lord Jesus Christ, but it said these words nonetheless. Is this not Satan's nature? What is Satan's nature? (To be sly, evil, and have no reverence for God.) What consequences would result from having no reverence for God? Was it not that it wanted to attack God? It wanted to use this method to attack God, and so it said: "If You be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread"; is this not Satan's evil intention? What was it really trying to do? Its purpose is very obvious: It was trying to use this method to deny the position and identity of the Lord Jesus Christ. What Satan meant by those words is, "If You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread. If You cannot do this, then You are not the Son of God, so You should not carry out Your work any longer." Is this not so? It wanted to use this method to attack God, it wanted to dismantle and destroy God's work; this is the malevolence of Satan. Its malevolence is a natural expression of its nature. Even though it knew the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the very incarnation of God Himself, it could not help but do this kind of thing, following closely behind God's back, persistently attacking Him and going to great lengths to disrupt and sabotage God's work.

Now, let us analyze this phrase that Satan spoke: "Command that these stones be made bread." To turn stones into bread—does this mean anything? If there is food, why not eat it? Why is it necessary to turn stones into food? Can it be said there is no meaning here? Although He was fasting at the time, surely the Lord Jesus had food to eat? (He did.) So, here we can see the preposterousness of Satan's words. For all Satan's treachery and malice, we can still see its preposterousness and absurdity. Satan does a number of things through which you can see its malicious nature; you can see it doing things that sabotage God's work, and seeing this, you feel that it is hateful and infuriating. But, on the other hand, do you not see a childish, ridiculous nature behind its words and actions? This is a revelation about Satan's nature; since it has this kind of nature, it will do this kind of thing. To people today, these words of Satan are preposterous and laughable. But Satan is indeed capable of uttering such words. Can we say that it is ignorant and absurd? Satan's evil is everywhere and it is constantly being revealed. And how did the Lord Jesus answer it? ("Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.") Do these words have any power? (They do.) Why do we say that they have power? It is because these words are the truth. Now, does man live by bread alone? The Lord Jesus fasted for forty days and nights. Did He

starve to death? He did not starve to death, so Satan approached Him, prompting Him to turn the stones into food by saying things such as: "If You turn the stones into food, won't You then have things to eat? Won't You then not have to fast, not have to go hungry?" But the Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone," which means that, although man lives in a physical body, it is not food that allows his physical body to live and breathe, but each and every one of the words uttered from the mouth of God. On the one hand, these words are truth; they give people faith, making them feel that they can depend on God and that He is truth. On the other hand, is there a practical aspect to these words? Was the Lord Jesus not still standing, still alive after fasting for forty days and nights? Is this not a real example? He had not eaten any food for forty days and nights, and yet He was still alive. This is powerful evidence confirming the truth of His words. These words are simple, but for the Lord Jesus, did He speak them only when Satan tempted Him, or were they already naturally a part of Him? To put it another way, God is truth, and God is life, but were God's truth and life a subsequent addition? Were they born of later experience? No—they are innate in God. That is to say, truth and life are God's essence. Whatever happens to Him, all that He reveals is truth. This truth, these words—whether the content of His speech be long or short—can enable man to live and give man life; they can enable people to gain truth and clarity about the path of human life, and enable them to have faith in God. In other words, the source of God's use of these words is positive. So can we say that this positive thing is holy? (Yes.) Those words of Satan come from Satan's nature. Satan reveals its evil and malicious nature everywhere, constantly. Now, does Satan make these revelations naturally? Does anyone direct it to do this? Does anyone help it? Does anyone coerce it? No. All of these revelations, it makes of its own accord. This is Satan's evil nature. Whatever God does and however He does it, Satan follows on His heels. The essence and the true nature of these things that Satan says and does are Satan's essence—an essence that is evil and malicious. Now, as we read on, what else did Satan say? Let us read.

Mat 4:5–7 Then the devil takes Him up into the holy city, and sets Him on a pinnacle of the temple, And said to Him, If You be the Son of God, cast Yourself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.

Let us first see the words that Satan spoke here. Satan said, "If You be the Son of God, cast Yourself down," and then it quoted from the Scriptures: "He shall give His angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone." How do you feel when you hear Satan's words? Are they not very childish? They are childish, preposterous, and disgusting. Why do I say this? Satan often does foolish things, and it believes itself to be very clever. It often quotes from the Scriptures—even the very words spoken by God—trying to turn these

words against God to attack Him and to tempt Him in an attempt to achieve its objective of sabotaging God's plan of work. Are you able to see anything in these words spoken by Satan? (Satan harbors evil intentions.) In all that Satan does, it has always sought to tempt mankind. Satan does not speak straightforwardly, but in a roundabout way using temptation, beguilement, and seduction. Satan approaches its temptation of God as though He were an ordinary human being, believing that God is also ignorant, foolish, and unable to clearly distinguish the true form of things, just as man is unable to. Satan thinks that God and man alike are unable to see through its essence and its deceit and sinister intent. Is this not what Satan's foolishness is? Furthermore, Satan overtly quotes from the Scriptures, believing that doing so lends it credibility, and that you will be unable to pick out any flaws in its words or to avoid being fooled. Is this not Satan's absurdity and childishness? This is just like when people spread the gospel and bear witness to God: Will not nonbelievers sometimes say something similar to what Satan said? Have you heard people say something similar? How do you feel when you hear such things? Do you feel disgusted? (Yes.) When you feel disgusted, do you also feel aversion and hate? When you have these feelings are you able to recognize that Satan and the corrupt disposition Satan works into man are wicked? In your hearts, do you ever have this realization: "When Satan speaks, it does so as an attack and a temptation; Satan's words are absurd, laughable, childish, and disgusting; however, God would never speak or work in such a way, and indeed He has never done so"? Of course, in this situation people are only able to faintly sense it, and remain unable to grasp God's holiness. With your current stature, you merely feel that: "Everything God says is the truth, is beneficial to us, and we must accept it." Regardless of whether you are able to accept this or not, you say without exception that God's word is truth and that God is truth, but you do not know that truth itself is holy and that God is holy.

So, what was Jesus' response to these words of Satan? Jesus said to it: "It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." Is there truth in these words that Jesus said? There is definitely truth in them. On the surface, these words are a commandment for people to follow, a simple phrase, yet nonetheless, both man and Satan have often offended these words. So, the Lord Jesus said to Satan, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God," because this is what Satan often did, taking pains as it went about it. It could be said that Satan did this brazenly and without shame. It is in Satan's nature and essence to not fear God and to not have reverence for God in its heart. Even when Satan stood beside God and could see Him, it could not help itself but to tempt God. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said to Satan, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." These are words that God has often said to Satan. So, is it appropriate for this phrase to be applied in the present day? (Yes, as we also often tempt God.) Why do people often tempt God? Is it because people are full of corrupt satanic disposition? (Yes.) So are the words of Satan above something people often say? And in what situations do people say these words? One could say that people have been saying things like this irrespective of time and

place. This proves that the disposition of people is no different from the corrupt disposition of Satan. The Lord Jesus said a few simple words, words that represent truth, words that people need. However, in this situation, was the Lord Jesus speaking in such a way as to argue with Satan? Was there anything confrontational in what He said to Satan? (No.) How did the Lord Jesus feel about Satan's temptation in His heart? Did He feel disgusted and repulsed? The Lord Jesus felt repulsed and disgusted, and yet He did not argue with Satan, and much less did He speak about any grand principles. Why is that? (Because Satan is always like this; it can never change.) Could it be said that Satan is impervious to reason? (Yes.) Can Satan recognize that God is truth? Satan will never recognize that God is truth and will never admit that God is truth; this is its nature. There is yet another aspect of Satan's nature that is repulsive. What is it? In its efforts to tempt the Lord Jesus, Satan thought that even if it was unsuccessful, it would nonetheless still try to do so. Even though it would be punished, it chose to try anyway. Even though it would gain no advantage out of doing so, it would try nonetheless, persisting in its efforts and standing against God until the very end. What sort of nature is this? Is it not evil? If a man becomes infuriated and flies into a rage when God is mentioned, has he seen God? Does he know who God is? He does not know who God is, does not believe in Him, and God has not spoken to him. God has never troubled him, so why would he be angry? Could we say that this person is evil? Worldly trends, eating, drinking, and pleasure-seeking, and chasing celebrities—none of these things would bother such a man. However, at the very mention of the word "God," or of the truth of God's words, he flies into a rage. Does this not constitute having an evil nature? This is sufficient to prove that this is man's evil nature. Now, speaking for yourselves, are there times when truth is mentioned, or when God's trials of mankind or God's words of judgment against man are mentioned, you feel an aversion; you feel repulsed, and you do not want to hear such things? Your heart may think: "Don't people all say that God is truth? Some of these words are not truth! They are clearly just God's words of admonishment toward man!" Some people might even feel a strong aversion in their hearts, and think: "This is spoken about every day—His trials, His judgment, when will it end? When will we receive the good destination?" It is not known where this unreasonable anger comes from. What sort of nature is this? (Evil nature.) It is directed and guided by the evil nature of Satan. From God's perspective, with regard to the evil nature of Satan and the corrupt disposition of man, He never argues or holds grudges against people, and He never makes a fuss when people act foolishly. You will never see God hold similar views on things to human beings, and moreover you will not see Him use mankind's viewpoints, knowledge, science, philosophy or imagination to handle matters. Rather, everything God does and everything He reveals is connected to truth. That is, every word He has said and every action He has taken is bound to the truth. This truth is not the product of some baseless fantasy; this truth and these words are expressed by God by virtue of His essence and His life. Because these words and the

essence of everything God has done are truth, we can say that God's essence is holy. In other words, everything God says and does brings vitality and light to people, enables people to see positive things and the reality of those positive things, and points the way for humanity so that they may walk the right path. These things are all determined by God's essence and by the essence of His holiness. You see this now, do you not? Now, we will continue with another reading from the Scriptures.

Mat 4:8–11 Again, the devil takes Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And said to Him, All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus to him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve. Then the devil leaves Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

The devil Satan, having failed at its previous two ploys, tried yet another: It showed all the kingdoms in the world and their glory to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to worship it. What can you see about the true features of the devil from this situation? Is the devil Satan not absolutely shameless? (Yes.) How is it shameless? All things were created by God, and yet Satan turned around and showed all things to God, saying, "Look at the wealth and glory of all of these kingdoms. If You worship me I'll give them all to You." Is this not a complete role reversal? Is Satan not shameless? God made all things, but did He make all things for His own enjoyment? God gave everything to mankind, but Satan wanted to seize it all and having seized it all, it told God, "Worship me! Worship me and I'll give this all to You." This is the ugly face of Satan; it is absolutely shameless! Satan does not even know the meaning of the word "shame." This is just another example of its evil. It does not even know what shame is. Satan clearly knows that God created all things and that He manages and has dominion over all things. All things belong not to man, and much less to Satan, but to God, and yet the devil Satan brazenly said that it would give all things to God. Is this not another example of Satan once again acting absurdly and shamelessly? This causes God to hate Satan even more, does it not? Yet no matter what Satan tried, was the Lord Jesus fooled? What did the Lord Jesus say? ("You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.") Do these words have a practical meaning? (Yes.) What sort of practical meaning? We see Satan's evil and shamelessness in its speech. So if man worshiped Satan, what would be the outcome? Would they obtain the wealth and glory of all of the kingdoms? (No.) What would they obtain? Would mankind become just as shameless and laughable as Satan? (Yes.) They would be no different from Satan then. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said these words, which are important for each and every human being: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." This means that except for the Lord, except for God Himself, if you served another, if you worshiped the devil Satan, then you would wallow in the same filth as Satan. You would then share Satan's shamelessness and its evil, and just like Satan you would tempt God and attack God. Then what would the

outcome be for you? You would be loathed by God, struck down by God, destroyed by God. After Satan had tempted the Lord Jesus several times without success, did it try again? Satan did not try again and then it left. What does this prove? It proves that Satan's evil nature, its malice, and its absurdity and preposterousness are not worth even mentioning in the face of God. The Lord Jesus defeated Satan with only three sentences, after which it scurried away with its tail between its legs, too ashamed to show its face, and it never again tempted the Lord Jesus. Since the Lord Jesus had defeated this temptation of Satan, He could now easily continue the work that He had to do and the tasks that lay before Him. Would everything that the Lord Jesus did and said in this situation carry any practical meaning for each and every human being if it were applied to the present day? (Yes.) What sort of practical meaning? Is defeating Satan an easy thing to do? Must people have a clear understanding of Satan's evil nature? Must people have an accurate understanding of Satan's temptations? (Yes.) When you experience Satan's temptations in your own life, if you were able to see through to Satan's evil nature, would you not be able to defeat it? If you knew about Satan's absurdity and preposterousness, would you still stand on Satan's side and attack God? If you understood how Satan's malice and shamelessness are being revealed through you—if you clearly recognized and understood these things—would you still attack and tempt God in this way? (No, we would not.) What would you do? (We would rebel against Satan and cast it aside.) Is that an easy thing to do? It is not easy. To do this, people must frequently pray, they must often place themselves before God and examine themselves. And they must let God's discipline and His judgment and chastisement come upon them. Only in this way will people gradually extricate themselves from Satan's deception and control.

Now, by looking at all of these words spoken by Satan, we will summarize the things that make up the essence of Satan. Firstly, Satan's essence can generally be said to be evil, in contrast to the holiness of God. Why do I say that Satan's essence is evil? To answer this question, one must examine the consequences of what Satan does to people. Satan corrupts and controls man, and man acts under the corrupt disposition of Satan, and lives in a world of people corrupted by Satan. Mankind is unwittingly possessed and assimilated by Satan; man therefore has the corrupt disposition of Satan, which is Satan's nature. From everything Satan has said and done, have you seen its arrogance? Have you seen its deceit and malice? How is Satan's arrogance primarily displayed? Does Satan always harbor the desire to occupy God's position? Satan always wants to tear down God's work, and God's position and take it for itself so that people will follow, support, and worship Satan; this is the arrogant nature of Satan. When Satan corrupts people, does it directly tell them what they should do? When Satan tempts God, does it come out and say, "I am tempting You, I am going to attack You"? It absolutely does not. So what method does Satan use? It seduces, tempts, attacks, and sets traps, and even quotes from the Scriptures. Satan speaks and acts in various

ways to achieve its sinister objectives and fulfill its intentions. After Satan has done this, what can be seen from what is manifested in man? Do people not also become arrogant? Man has suffered from Satan's corruption for thousands of years and so man has become arrogant, deceitful, malicious, and beyond reason. All of these things are brought about due to Satan's nature. Since Satan's nature is evil, it has given man this evil nature and brought to man this evil, corrupt disposition. Therefore, man lives under the corrupt satanic disposition and, like Satan, resists God, attacks God, and tempts Him, such that man cannot worship God and does not have a heart that reveres Him.

Five Ways in Which Satan Corrupts Man

Regarding God's holiness, even though it may be a familiar topic, it is a topic which, when spoken about, might become a bit abstract for some people and be a bit profound and beyond their reach. But there is no need to be anxious. I will help you to understand what God's holiness is. To understand what kind of person someone is, look at what they do and the outcomes of their actions, and then you will be able to see the essence of that person. Could it be put in this way? (Yes.) Then, let us first fellowship on God's holiness from this perspective. It can be said that Satan's essence is evil, and so Satan's actions toward man have been to ceaselessly corrupt them. Satan is evil, so the people it has corrupted are certainly evil. Would anyone say, "Satan is evil, but perhaps someone it corrupted is holy"? That would be a joke, would it not? Could such a thing be possible? (No.) Satan is evil, and contained within its evil there is both an essential and a practical side. This is not just empty talk. We are not trying to smear Satan; we are merely fellowshiping about truth and reality. Fellowshiping on the reality of this topic might hurt some people or a certain subsection of people, but there is no malicious intent; perhaps you will hear this today and feel a bit uncomfortable, but someday soon, when you are able to recognize it, you will despise yourselves, and you will feel that what I talk about today is very useful to you and very valuable. The essence of Satan is evil, so could we say that the results of Satan's actions are inevitably evil, or at the very least, are bound to its evil? (Yes.) So how does Satan go about corrupting man? Of the evil that Satan does in the world and among humanity, which specific aspects of it are visible and perceptible to people? Have you ever thought about this before? You might not have given it much thought, so let Me bring up several main points. Everyone knows about the theory of evolution that Satan proposes, right? This is an area of knowledge studied by man, is it not? (Yes.) So, Satan first uses knowledge to corrupt man and uses its own satanic methods to impart knowledge to them. Then it uses science to corrupt man, arousing their interest in knowledge, science, mysterious matters or in matters people desire to explore. The next things Satan uses to corrupt man are traditional culture and superstition, and following that, social trends. These are all things that people encounter in their daily lives, and all exist in close proximity to people; they are all connected to the things they see, things they hear, things they touch, and things they experience. One could say that each and every human being lives their life surrounded by these things, unable to escape or free themselves of them even if they wanted to. In the face of these things, mankind is helpless, and all that man can do is to be influenced, infected, controlled and bound by them; man is powerless to free himself from them.

a. How Satan Uses Knowledge to Corrupt Man

First, we will talk about knowledge. Is knowledge something that everyone considers to be a positive thing? At the very least, people think that the connotation of the word "knowledge" is positive rather than negative. So why are we mentioning here that Satan uses knowledge to corrupt man? Is the theory of evolution not an aspect of knowledge? Are Newton's scientific laws not a part of knowledge? The gravitational pull of the earth is also a part of knowledge, is it not? (Yes.) So why is knowledge listed among the things that Satan uses to corrupt mankind? What is your view on this? Does knowledge have even a shred of truth in it? (No.) Then what is the essence of knowledge? On what basis is all the knowledge that man acquires learned? Is it based on the theory of evolution? Is not the knowledge that man has gained through exploration and summation based on atheism? Does any of this knowledge have a connection to God? Is it connected with worshiping God? Is it connected to truth? (No.) So how does Satan use knowledge to corrupt man? I just said that none of this knowledge is connected with worshiping God or with truth. Some people think about it like this: "Knowledge might not have anything to do with truth, but still, it doesn't corrupt people." What is your view on this? Were you taught by knowledge that a person's happiness must be created with their own two hands? Did knowledge teach you that man's fate was in his own hands? (Yes.) What kind of talk is this? (It is devilish talk.) Absolutely right! It is devilish talk! Knowledge is a complicated subject to discuss. You may state simply that a field of knowledge is nothing more than knowledge. That is a field of knowledge that is learned on the basis of not worshiping God and on not understanding that God created all things. When people study this type of knowledge, they do not see God having sovereignty over all things; they do not see God being in charge of or managing all things. Instead, all they do is endlessly research and explore that area of knowledge, and seek out answers based on knowledge. However, is it not true that if people do not believe in God and instead only pursue research, they will never find the true answers? All that knowledge can give you is a livelihood, a job, income so that you do not go hungry; but it will never make you worship God, and it will never keep you far from evil. The more people study knowledge, the more they will desire to rebel against God, to subject God to their studies, to tempt God, and to resist God. So, what do we now see that knowledge is teaching people? It is all the philosophy of Satan. Do the philosophies and rules of survival spread by Satan among corrupt men have any relation to truth? They have nothing to do with truth and, in fact, are the opposite of the truth. People often say, "Life is motion" and "Man is iron, rice is steel, man feels famished if he skips a meal"; what are these sayings? They are fallacies, and hearing them causes a feeling of disgust. In man's so-called knowledge, Satan has imbued quite a bit of its philosophy for living and its thinking. And as Satan does this, it allows man to adopt its thinking, philosophy, and points of view so that man may deny the existence of God, deny God's dominion over all things and over man's fate. So as man's studies progress and he gains more knowledge, he feels the existence of God become vague, and might even no longer feel that God exists. Because Satan has instilled certain thoughts, views, and notions in man, once Satan has instilled this venom inside man, is man not duped and corrupted by Satan? So what would you say the people of today live by? Do they not live by the knowledge and thoughts—are they not the philosophies and venom of Satan? Man lives by the philosophies and venom of Satan. And what lies at the core of Satan's corruption of man? Satan wants to make man deny, oppose, and stand against God like it does; this is Satan's goal in corrupting man, and also the means by which Satan corrupts man.

We will start by addressing the most superficial aspect of knowledge. Are the grammar and words in languages able to corrupt people? Can words corrupt people? Words do not corrupt people; they are a tool that people use to speak and they are also the tool with which people communicate with God, not to mention that at present, language and words are how God communicates with people. They are tools, and they are a necessity. One plus one equals two, and two multiplied by two equals four; is this not knowledge? But can this corrupt you? This is common knowledge—it is a fixed pattern—and so it cannot corrupt people. So what type of knowledge does corrupt people? Corrupting knowledge is knowledge that is intermingled with Satan's viewpoints and thoughts. Satan seeks to inculcate these viewpoints and thoughts into humanity through the medium of knowledge. For example, in an article, there is nothing wrong with the written words in themselves. The problem lies with the viewpoints and intent of the author when they wrote the article, as well as the content of their thoughts. These are things of the spirit, and they are able to corrupt people. For example, if you were watching a television show, what sort of things in it could change people's view? Would what the performers said, the words themselves, be able to corrupt people? (No.) What sort of things would corrupt people? It would be the core thoughts and content of the show, which would represent the director's views. The information carried in these views could sway people's hearts and minds. Is that not so? Now you know what I am referring to in My discussion of Satan using knowledge to corrupt people. You will not misunderstand, will you? So the next time you read a novel or an article, will you be able to evaluate whether or not the thoughts expressed in the written words corrupt mankind or contribute to humanity? (Yes, to a small extent.) This is something that must be studied and experienced at a slow pace, and it is not something that is easily understood right away. For example, when researching or studying an area of knowledge, some positive aspects of that knowledge may help you to understand some general knowledge about that field, while also enabling you to know what people should avoid. For example, take "electricity"—this is a field of knowledge, is it not? Would you not be ignorant if you did not know that electricity can shock and hurt people? But once you understand this field of knowledge, you will not be careless about touching objects with electrical currents, and you will know how to use electricity. These are both positive things. Are you now clear on what we have been discussing in terms of how knowledge corrupts people? There are many types of knowledge studied in the world, and you must take your time to differentiate them for yourselves.

b. How Satan Uses Science to Corrupt Man

What is science? Is not science held in high prestige in the mind of each and every human and considered profound? When science is mentioned, do people not feel: "This is something beyond the reach of ordinary people; this is a topic that only scientific researchers or experts can touch; it has nothing to do with us regular folks"? Does it have any connection to ordinary people? (Yes.) How does Satan use science to corrupt people? In our discussion here, we will talk only about the things that people frequently encounter in their own lives, and disregard other matters. There is a word "genes." Have you heard of it? You are all familiar with this term. Were genes not discovered through science? What exactly do genes mean to people? Do they not make people feel that the body is a mysterious thing? When people are introduced to this topic, will there not be some people—especially the curious—who will want to know more and want more details? These curious people will focus their energy on this subject and when they do not have other things to do, they will search for information in books and on the internet to learn more details about it. What is science? To speak plainly, science is the thoughts and theories of things that man is curious about, things that are unknown, and not told to them by God; science is the thoughts and theories about the mysteries that man wants to explore. What is the scope of science? You could say that it is rather broad; man researches and studies everything in which he is interested. Science involves researching the details and the laws of these things and then putting forth plausible theories which cause everyone to think: "These scientists are really terrific! They know so much, enough to understand these things!" They have so much admiration for scientists, do they not? People that research science, what sort of views do they hold? Do they not want to research the universe, to research the mysterious things in their area of interest? What is the final outcome of this? In some of the sciences, people draw their conclusions by conjecture, and in others they rely on human experience to draw conclusions. In yet other fields of science, people come to their conclusions based on historical and background observations. Is this not so? So what does science do for people? What science does is merely to allow people to see the objects in the physical world, and to satisfy man's curiosity, but it cannot enable man to see the laws by which God has dominion over all things. Man seems to find answers in science, but those

answers are puzzling and bring only temporary satisfaction, a satisfaction that only serves to confine the heart of man to the material world. Man feels that they have received answers from science, so whatever issue arises, they use their scientific views as a basis to prove and accept that issue. Man's heart becomes seduced by science and possessed by it to the point that man no longer has the mind to know God, worship God and believe that all things come from God and that man should look to Him for answers. Is this not so? The more a person believes in science, the more absurd they become, believing that everything has a scientific solution, that research can solve anything. They do not seek God and they do not believe He exists. There are many longterm believers in God who, when faced with any problem, will use a computer to look things up and search for answers; they believe only in scientific knowledge. They do not believe that God's words are the truth, they do not believe that God's words can solve all of mankind's problems, they do not view mankind's myriad problems from the perspective of the truth. No matter what problem they encounter, they never pray to God or seek a resolution by searching for the truth in God's words. In many matters, they'd prefer to believe that knowledge can solve the problem; for them, science is the ultimate answer. God is totally absent from such people's hearts. They are nonbelievers, and their views on belief in God are no different from those of many distinguished academics and scientists, who are always trying to examine God using scientific methods. For example, there are many religious experts who have gone to the mountain where the ark came to rest, and thus they proved the existence of the ark. But in the appearance of the ark they do not see the existence of God. They believe only in the stories and the history; this is the result of their scientific research and study of the material world. If you research material things, whether it be microbiology, astronomy, or geography, you will never find a result that determines that God exists or that He has sovereignty over all things. So what does science do for man? Does it not distance man from God? Does it not cause people to subject God to studies? Does it not make people more doubtful of God's existence and sovereignty, and thus deny and betray God? This is the consequence. So when Satan uses science to corrupt man, what aim is Satan trying to achieve? It wants to use scientific conclusions to deceive people and make them numb, and use ambiguous answers to hold on to people's hearts so that they will not seek out or believe in God's existence. So this is why I say that science is one of the ways in which Satan corrupts people.

c. How Satan Uses Traditional Culture to Corrupt Man

Are there or are there not many things that are considered part of traditional culture? (There are.) What does this "traditional culture" mean? Some say it is passed down from the ancestors—this is one aspect. From the beginning, ways of life, customs, sayings and rules have been passed down within families, ethnic groups and even the entire human race, and they have become instilled in people's thoughts. People consider them

an indispensable part of their lives and regard them as rules, observing them as though they were life itself. Indeed, they never want to change or abandon these things, because they were passed down from their ancestors. There are other aspects of traditional culture which are ingrained into people's very bones, like the things that were passed down from Confucius and Mencius, and the things taught to people by Chinese Taoism and Confucianism. Is this not so? What things are included in traditional culture? Does it include the holidays people celebrate? For example: the Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, the Dragon Boat Festival, as well as the Ghost Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. Some families even celebrate the days when seniors achieve a certain age, or when children reach one month or one hundred days of age. And so on. These are all traditional holidays. Is there not traditional culture underlying these holidays? What is the core of traditional culture? Does it have anything to do with worshiping God? Does it have anything to do with telling people to practice the truth? Are there any holidays for people to offer sacrifice to God, go to God's altar and receive His teachings? Are there holidays like this? (No.) What do people do on all of these holidays? In modern times they are seen as occasions for eating, drinking, and fun. What is the source underlying traditional culture? Who does traditional culture come from? It comes from Satan. Behind the scenes of these traditional holidays, Satan instills certain things in man. What are these things? Ensuring that people remember their ancestors is that one of them? For example, during Tomb Sweeping Day, people tidy up graves and offer sacrifices to their ancestors, so as not to forget their ancestors. Also, Satan ensures that people remember to be patriotic, of which an example is the Dragon Boat Festival. What about the Mid-Autumn Festival? (Family reunions.) What is the background of family reunions? What is the reason for it? It is to communicate and connect emotionally. Of course, whether it be celebrating Lunar New Year's Eve or the Lantern Festival, there are many ways of describing the reasons behind these celebrations. However one describes those reasons, each one is Satan's way of instilling its philosophy and its thinking in people, so that they will stray from God and not know there is God, and offer sacrifices either to their ancestors or to Satan, or eat, drink, and have fun for the sake of desires of the flesh. As each of these holidays is celebrated, Satan's thoughts and views are planted deep within the minds of the people without their knowing. When people reach their forties, fifties or even older ages, these thoughts and viewpoints of Satan are already deeply rooted in their hearts. Moreover, people do their utmost to transmit these ideas, whether right or wrong, down to the next generation, indiscriminately and without reservation. Is not this so? (Yes.) How do traditional culture and these holidays corrupt people? Do you know? (People become constrained and bound by the rules of these traditions, such that they have no time or energy to seek God.) This is one aspect. For example, everyone celebrates during Lunar New Year—if you did not celebrate it, would you not feel sad? Are there any superstitions that you hold in your heart? Might you feel, "I didn't celebrate the New Year, and since Lunar New

Year's day was a bad day, won't the whole of the rest of the year also be bad"? Would you not feel ill at ease and a bit afraid? There are even some people who have not made sacrifices to their ancestors in years and who suddenly have a dream in which a deceased person asks them for money. What would they feel? "How sad that this person now gone needs money to spend! I'll burn some paper money for them. If I don't, that just wouldn't be right. It might cause trouble for us living people—who can say when misfortune will strike?" They will always have this little cloud of fear and worry in their hearts. Who gives them this worry? Satan is the source of this worry. Is this not one of the ways that Satan corrupts man? It uses different means and pretexts to control you, to threaten you, and to bind you, so that you fall into a daze and yield and submit to it; this is how Satan corrupts man. Often when people are weak or when they are not fully aware of the situation, they may inadvertently do something in a muddle-headed way; that is, they inadvertently fall into Satan's grasp and might act unwittingly, might do things without knowing what they are doing. This is the way Satan corrupts man. There are even quite a few people now who are reluctant to part with deep-rooted traditional culture, who just cannot give it up. It is especially when they are weak and passive that they wish to celebrate these kinds of holidays and they wish to meet Satan and satisfy Satan again, to bring comfort to their hearts. What is the background to the traditional culture? Is the black hand of Satan pulling the strings behind the scenes? Is Satan's evil nature manipulating and controlling? Does Satan hold sway over all of this? (Yes.) When people live in a traditional culture and celebrate these kinds of traditional holidays, could we say that this is an environment in which they are being fooled and corrupted by Satan, and moreover that they are happy to be fooled and corrupted by Satan? (Yes.) This is something you all acknowledge, something that you know about.

d. How Satan Uses Superstition to Corrupt Man

You are familiar with the term "superstition," yes? There are some links between superstition and traditional culture, but we will not talk about those today. Rather, I will discuss the most commonly encountered forms of superstition: divination, fortune-telling, burning incense and worshiping Buddha. Some people practice divination, others worship Buddha and burn incense, while others have their fortunes read or have someone read their facial features and tell their fortunes in this way. How many of you have had your fortunes told or had a face-reading? This is something most people are interested in, is it not? (Yes.) Why? What sort of benefit do people gain from fortune-telling and divination? What kind of satisfaction do they gain from it? (Curiosity.) Is it just curiosity? That is not necessarily it, as I see it. What is the goal of divination and fortune-telling? Why is it done? Is it not to see the future? Some people have their face read to predict the future, others do it to see whether or not they will have good luck. Some people do it to see what their marriage will be like, and yet others do it to see what fortune the year ahead will bring. Some people have their face read to see what their prospects and those of their sons or

daughters will be, and some business people do it to see how much money they will make, seeking the guidance of the face-reader about what actions they should take. So, is this done just to satisfy curiosity? When people have their face read or do these sorts of things, it is for their own future personal benefit; they believe that all of this is closely connected with their own fate. Is any of this useful? (No.) Why is it not useful? Is it not a good thing to gain some knowledge through these things? These practices may help you know when trouble may strike, and if you learn about these troubles before they happen, could you not avoid them? If you have your fortune told, it might show you how to find the right path out of the maze, so that you may enjoy good luck in the year ahead and come into great wealth through your business. So, is it or is it not useful? Whether it is useful or not has no connection with us, and our fellowship today will not involve this topic. How does Satan use superstition to corrupt man? People all want to know their fate, so Satan takes advantage of their curiosity to entice them. People engage in divination, fortunetelling, and face-reading in order to learn what will happen to them in the future and what sort of road lies ahead. In the end, though, in whose hands are the fate and prospects with which people are so concerned? (In God's hands.) All of these things are in God's hands. In using these methods, what does Satan want people to know? Satan wants to use face-reading and fortune-telling to tell people that it knows their future fortunes, and that it not only knows these things but is also in control of them. Satan wants to take advantage of this opportunity and use these methods to control people, such that people put blind faith in it and obey its every word. For example, if you have a face-reading done, if the fortune-teller closes his eyes and tells you everything that has happened to you in the last few decades with perfect clarity, how would you feel inside? You would immediately feel, "He's so accurate! I've never told my past to anyone before, how did he know about it? I really admire this fortune-teller!" For Satan, is it not too easy to know about your past? God has led you to where you are today, and all the while Satan has been corrupting people and following you. The passage of decades of your life is nothing to Satan and it is not difficult for Satan to know these things. When you learn that all that Satan says is accurate, are you not giving your heart over to it? Are you not depending on it to take control of your future and your fortunes? In an instant, your heart will feel some respect or reverence for it, and for some people, their souls may already be snatched away by it at this point. And you will immediately ask the fortune-teller: "What should I do next? What should I avoid in the coming year? What things must I not do?" And then, he will say, "You must not go there, you must not do this, do not wear clothes of a certain color, you should go to certain places less, do certain things more...." Will you not take everything he says immediately to heart? You would memorize his words faster than the words of God. Why would you memorize them so quickly? Because you would want to rely on Satan for good luck. Is this not when it seizes your heart? When its predictions come true, one after the other, would you not want to go right back to it to find out what fortune the next year will bring? (Yes.) You would do whatever Satan tells you

to do and you would avoid the things it says to avoid. In this way, are you not obeying everything it says? Very quickly, you will fall into its embrace, be deceived, and come under its control. This happens because you believe what it says is the truth and because you believe that it knows about your past lives, your life now, and what the future will bring. This is the method Satan uses to control people. But in reality, who is really in control? God Himself is in control, not Satan. Satan is just using its clever ploys in this case to trick ignorant people, trick people who only see the material world, into believing and relying on it. Then, they fall into Satan's grasp and obey its every word. But does Satan ever loosen its grip when people want to believe in and follow God? Satan does not. In this situation, are people really falling into Satan's grasp? (Yes.) Could we say that Satan's behavior in this regard is shameless? (Yes.) Why would we say that? Because these are fraudulent and deceitful tactics. Satan is shameless and misleads people into thinking it controls everything about them and that it controls their very fate. This causes ignorant people to obey it completely. They are fooled with just a few words. In their daze, people bow down before it. So, what sort of methods does Satan use, what does it say to cause you to believe in it? For example, you might not have told Satan how many people are in your family, but it might still be able to tell you how many people there are, and the ages of your parents and children. Though you might have had your suspicions and doubts about Satan before this, after hearing it say these things, would you not then feel it is a little more believable? Satan might then say how difficult work has been for you recently, that your superiors do not give you the recognition you deserve and are always working against you, and so on. After hearing that, you would think, "That's exactly right! Things haven't been going smoothly at work." So you would believe Satan a bit more. Then it would say something else to deceive you, making you believe it even more. Little by little, you would find yourself unable to resist or remain suspicious of it anymore. Satan merely uses a few trivial tricks, even trifling little tricks, and in this way confounds you. As you become confounded, you will be unable to establish your bearings, you will be at a loss as to what to do, and you will begin to follow what Satan says. This is the "brilliant" method Satan uses to corrupt man, which causes you to unwittingly fall into its trap and be seduced by it. Satan tells you a few things that people imagine to be good, and then it tells you what to do and what to avoid. This is how you are unwittingly tricked. Once you have fallen for it, things will get sticky for you; you will constantly be thinking about what Satan said and what it told you to do, and you will unknowingly be possessed by it. Why is this? It is because mankind lacks the truth and so is unable to stand firm and resist Satan's seduction and temptation. Faced with Satan's evil and its deceit, treachery, and malice, mankind is so ignorant, immature and weak, is it not? Is this not one of the ways Satan corrupts man? (Yes.) Man is unwittingly deceived and tricked, little by little, by Satan's various methods, because they lack the ability to differentiate between the positive and the negative. They lack this stature, and the ability to triumph over Satan.

e. How Satan Uses Social Trends to Corrupt Man

When did social trends come into existence? Did they only come into being in the present day? One could say that social trends came to be when Satan started corrupting people. What do social trends include? (Styles of clothing and makeup.) These are things that people often come into contact with. Styles of clothing, fashion, and trends these things make up one small aspect. Is there anything else? Do the popular phrases that people often come out with count too? Do the lifestyles that people desire count? Do the music stars, celebrities, magazines, and novels that people like count? (Yes.) In your minds, which aspect of social trends is able to corrupt man? Which of these trends is most alluring to you? Some people say: "We've all reached a certain age, we are in our fifties or sixties, our seventies or eighties, and we can't fit in with these trends anymore and they don't really hold our attention." Is this correct? Others say: "We don't follow celebrities, that's something youngsters in their twenties do; we also don't wear fashionable clothes, that's something image-conscious people do." So which of these is able to corrupt you? (Popular sayings.) Can these sayings corrupt people? I will give an example, and you can see whether or not it corrupts people: "Money makes the world go round"; is this a trend? Compared to the fashion and gourmet trends you mentioned, is this not much worse? "Money makes the world go round" is a philosophy of Satan. It prevails among the whole of mankind, in every human society; you could say it is a trend. This is because it has been instilled in the heart of every single person, who at first did not accept this saying, but then gave it tacit acceptance when they came into contact with real life, and began to feel that these words were in fact true. Is this not a process of Satan corrupting man? Perhaps people do not understand this saying to the same degree, but everyone has different degrees of interpretation and acknowledgment of this saying based on things that have happened around them and on their own personal experiences. Is that not the case? Regardless of how much experience someone has with this saying, what is the negative effect that it can have on someone's heart? Something is revealed through the human disposition of the people in this world, including each and every one of you. What is it? It is the worship of money. Is it hard to remove this from someone's heart? It is very hard! It seems that Satan's corruption of man is deep indeed! Satan uses money to tempt people, and corrupts them into worshiping money and venerating material things. And how is this worship of money manifested in people? Do you feel that you could not survive in this world without any money, that even one day without money would be impossible? People's status is based on how much money they have, as is the respect they command. The backs of the poor are bent in shame, while the rich enjoy their high status. They stand tall and proud, speaking loudly and living arrogantly. What does this saying and trend bring to people? Is it not true that many people make any sacrifice in the pursuit of money? Do many people not lose their dignity and integrity in the pursuit of more money? Do many people

not lose the opportunity to perform their duty and follow God for the sake of money? Is losing the chance to gain the truth and be saved not the greatest of all losses for people? Is Satan not sinister to use this method and this saying to corrupt man to such a degree? Is this not a malicious trick? As you progress from objecting to this popular saying to finally accepting it as truth, your heart falls completely into Satan's grasp, and therefore you inadvertently come to live by the saying. To what degree has this saying affected you? You might know the true way, and you might know the truth, but you are powerless to pursue it. You may clearly know that God's words are the truth, but you are unwilling to pay the price or to suffer in order to gain the truth. Instead, you would rather sacrifice your own future and destiny to resist God to the very end. No matter what God says, no matter what God does, no matter whether you understand how deep and how great God's love for you is, you would stubbornly insist on having your own way and pay the price for this saying. Which is to say, this saying has already tricked and controlled your thoughts, it has already governed your behavior, and you would rather let it rule your fate than set aside your pursuit of wealth. That people can act thus, that they can be controlled and manipulated by the words of Satan—does this not mean that they have been tricked and corrupted by Satan? Have the philosophy and mindset of Satan, and the disposition of Satan, not taken root in your heart? When you blindly pursue wealth, and abandon the pursuit of the truth, has Satan not achieved its aim of tricking you? This is exactly the case. So can you feel it when you are tricked and corrupted by Satan? You cannot. If you cannot see Satan standing right in front of you, or feel that it is Satan acting in the shadows, would you be able to see the wickedness of Satan? Could you know how Satan corrupts mankind? Satan corrupts man at all times and in all places. Satan makes it impossible for man to defend against this corruption and makes man helpless against it. Satan makes you accept its thoughts, its viewpoints and the evil things that come from it in situations where you are unknowing and when you have no recognition of what is happening to you. People accept these things and take no exception to them. They cherish and hold on to these things like a treasure, they let these things manipulate them and toy with them; this is how people live under the power of Satan, and unconsciously obey Satan, and Satan's corruption of man grows ever deeper.

Satan uses these several methods to corrupt man. Man has knowledge and an understanding of some scientific principles, man lives under the influence of traditional culture, and every human is an inheritor and transmitter of traditional culture. Man is bound to carry on the traditional culture given to him by Satan, and man also conforms with the social trends Satan provides to mankind. Man is inseparable from Satan, conforming with all that Satan does at all times, accepting its evil, deceit, malice and arrogance. Once man came to possess these dispositions of Satan, has he been happy or sorrowful living among this corrupt mankind? (Sorrowful.) Why do you say that? (Because man is tied down and controlled by these corrupt things, he lives in sin and is

engulfed in an arduous struggle.) Some people wear spectacles, appearing to be very intellectual; they might speak very respectably, with eloquence and reason, and because they have gone through many things, they might be very experienced and sophisticated. They might be able to speak in detail about matters great and small; they might also be able to assess the authenticity and reason of things. Some might look at the behavior and appearance of these people, as well as their character, humanity, conduct, and so on, and find no fault with them. Such people are particularly able to adapt to current social trends. Even though these people might be older, they never fall behind the trends of the times and are never too old to learn. On the surface, no one can find fault with such a person, yet right down to their inner essence they are utterly and completely corrupted by Satan. Though no external fault can be found with these people, though on the surface they are gentle, refined, and possess knowledge and a certain morality, and they have integrity, and though in terms of knowledge they are in no way inferior to young people, yet in regard to their nature and essence, such people are a full and living model of Satan; they are the spitting image of Satan. This is the "fruit" of Satan's corruption of man. What I have said may be hurtful to you, but it is all true. The knowledge man studies, the science he understands, and the means he chooses by which he fits in with social trends are without exception tools of Satan's corruption of man. This is absolutely true. Therefore, man lives within a disposition that is completely corrupted by Satan, and man has no way of knowing what God's holiness is or what God's essence is. This is because on the surface one cannot find fault with the ways Satan corrupts man; one cannot tell from someone's behavior that anything is amiss. Everyone goes about their work normally and lives normal lives; they read books and newspapers normally, they study and speak normally. Some people have learned a few ethics and are good at talking, are understanding and friendly, are helpful and charitable, and do not pick petty quarrels or take advantage of people. However, their corrupt satanic disposition is rooted deep within them and this essence cannot be changed by relying on external effort. Because of this essence, man is not able to know God's holiness, and despite the essence of God's holiness being disclosed to man, man does not take it seriously. This is because Satan has, through various means, already come to completely possess man's feelings, ideas, viewpoints and thoughts. This possession and corruption is not temporary or occasional, but is present everywhere and at all times. Thus, a great many people who have believed in God for three or four years, or even five or six, still take these evil thoughts, views, logic, and philosophies that Satan has instilled in them as treasures, and are unable to let go of them. Because man has accepted the evil, arrogant and malicious things that come from the nature of Satan, inevitably in man's interpersonal relationships there are often conflicts, arguments and incompatibility, which come about as a result of Satan's arrogant nature. If Satan had given mankind positive things—for example, if the Confucianism and Taoism of traditional culture that man has accepted were good things—similar types of people should be able to get along

with one another after accepting those things. So why is there such a great divide between people who have accepted the same things? Why is that? It is because these things come from Satan and Satan creates division among people. The things from Satan, no matter how dignified or great they appear on the surface, bring to man and bring out in man's life only arrogance, and nothing more than the deceit of Satan's evil nature. Is that not so? Someone who is able to disguise themselves, who possesses a wealth of knowledge or who has a good upbringing would still have a hard time concealing their corrupt satanic disposition. That is to say, no matter how many ways this person cloaked themselves, whether you thought of them as a saint, or if you thought they were perfect, or if you thought they were an angel, no matter how pure you thought they were, what is their real life like behind the scenes? What essence would you see in the revelation of their disposition? Without a doubt you would see the evil nature of Satan. Is it admissible to say that? (Yes.) For example, suppose you know someone close to you who you thought of as a good person, perhaps someone you idolized. With your current stature, what do you think of them? First, you evaluate whether or not this type of person has humanity, whether they are honest, whether they have true love for people, whether their words and actions benefit and help others. (They do not.) What is the so-called kindness, love or goodness that these people reveal? It is all false, it is all a facade. Behind this facade there is an ulterior evil purpose: to make that person adored and idolized. Do you see this clearly? (Yes.)

What do the methods Satan uses to corrupt people bring to mankind? Do they bring anything positive? Firstly, can man differentiate between good and evil? Would you say that in this world, whether it be some famous or great person, or some magazine or other publication, are the standards they use to judge whether something is good or evil, and right or wrong, accurate? Are their assessments of events and people fair? Do they contain truth? Does this world, this humanity, assess positive and negative things based on the standard of truth? (No.) Why do people not have that ability? People have studied so much knowledge and know so much about science, so they are possessed of great abilities, are they not? So why are they incapable of differentiating between positive and negative things? Why is this? (Because people do not have truth; science and knowledge are not truth.) Everything that Satan brings to humanity is evil, corrupt and lacking in truth, life and the way. With the evil and corruption that Satan brings to man, can you say that Satan has love? Can you say that man has love? Some people might say: "You're wrong; there are many people around the world who help the poor or homeless. Aren't those good people? There are also charitable organizations that do good work; isn't the work they do good work?" What would you say to that? Satan uses many different methods and theories to corrupt man; is this corruption of man a vague concept? No, it is not vague. Satan also does some practical things, and it also promotes a viewpoint or a theory in this world and in society. In every dynasty and in every epoch, it promotes a theory and instills thoughts into the minds of man. These thoughts and

theories gradually take root in people's hearts, and then they begin to live by them. Once they start to live by these things, do they not unwittingly become Satan? Do people not then become one with Satan? When people have become one with Satan, what is their attitude toward God in the end? Is it not the same attitude that Satan has toward God? No one dares to admit this, do they? How horrifying! Why do I say that Satan's nature is evil? I do not say this groundlessly; rather, Satan's nature is determined and analyzed based on what it has done and the things it has revealed. If I just said Satan was evil, what would you think? You would think: "Obviously Satan is evil." So I ask you: "Which aspects of Satan are evil?" If you say: "Satan's resistance toward God is evil," you still would not be speaking with clarity. Now that I have spoken about the specifics in this way, do you have an understanding about the specific content of the essence of Satan's evil? (Yes.) If you are able to see clearly Satan's evil nature, then you will see your own conditions. Is there any relationship between these two things? Is this helpful to you or not? (It is.) When I fellowship about the essence of God's holiness, is it necessary that I fellowship about the evil essence of Satan? What is your opinion about this? (Yes, it is necessary.) Why? (Satan's evil sets God's holiness in relief.) Is that how it is? This is partially correct, in the sense that without Satan's evil, people would not know that God is holy; it is right to say this. However, if you say that God's holiness only exists due to its contrast with Satan's evil, is this right? This dialectical way of thinking is wrong. God's holiness is the inherent essence of God; even when God reveals it through His deeds, this is still a natural expression of God's essence and it is still God's inherent essence; it has always existed and is intrinsic and innate to God Himself, though man cannot see it. This is because man lives amidst the corrupt disposition of Satan and under Satan's influence, and they do not know about holiness, much less about the specific content of God's holiness. So, is it essential that we fellowship first about Satan's evil essence? (Yes, it is.) Some people may express some doubt: "You are fellowshiping about God Himself, so why are You always talking about how Satan corrupts people and how Satan's nature is evil?" Now you have put these doubts to rest, haven't you? When people have discernment of Satan's evil and when they have an accurate definition of it, when people can clearly see the specific content and manifestation of evil, the source and essence of evil, only then, through discussion of God's holiness, can people clearly realize or recognize what God's holiness is, what holiness is. If I do not discuss the evil of Satan, some people will mistakenly believe that some things that people do in society and among people—or certain things that exist in this world—may bear some relation to holiness. Is this not a wrong viewpoint? (Yes, it is.)

Now that I have fellowshiped on Satan's essence in this way, what sort of understanding of God's holiness have you gained through your experiences in the past few years, from your reading the word of God and from experiencing His work? Go ahead and speak about it. You do not have to use words that are pleasing to the ear, but just speak from your own experiences. Does God's holiness consist solely of His love? Is it

merely God's love that we describe as holiness? That would be too one-sided, would it not? Besides God's love, are there other aspects of God's essence? Have you seen them? (Yes. God detests festivals and holidays, customs and superstitions; this is also God's holiness.) God is holy, so therefore He detests things, is that what you mean? When it comes down to it, what is God's holiness? Is it that God's holiness has no substantial content, only hate? In your minds are you thinking, "Because God hates these evil things, therefore one can say that God is holy"? Is this not speculation here? Is this not a form of extrapolation and judgment? What is the greatest misstep that absolutely must be avoided when it comes to our understanding God's essence? (It is when we leave reality behind and instead speak of doctrines.) This is a very great misstep. Is there anything else? (Speculation and imagination.) These are also very serious missteps. Why are speculation and imagination not useful? Are things that you speculate about and imagine things you can truly see? Are they the true essence of God? (No.) What else must be avoided? Is it a misstep to just recite a string of pleasant words to describe God's essence? (Yes.) Is this not grandiose and nonsensical? Judgment and speculation are nonsensical, as is the act of picking out pleasant words. Empty praise is also nonsensical, is it not? Does God enjoy listening to people talk this kind of nonsense? (No, He does not.) He feels uncomfortable when He hears it! When God guides and saves a group of people, after this group of people have heard His words, they nonetheless never understand what He means. Someone may ask: "Is God good?" and they would respond, "Yes!" "How good?" "So very good!" "Does God love man?" "Yes!" "How much? Can you describe it?" "So very much! God's love is deeper than the sea, higher than the sky!" Are these words not nonsense? And is this nonsense not similar to what you just said: "God hates Satan's corrupt disposition, and therefore God is holy"? (Yes.) Is what you just said not nonsense? And where do the majority of nonsensical things that are said come from? Nonsensical things that are said primarily come from people's irresponsibility and irreverence to God. Could we say that? You did not have any understanding, and yet still you talked nonsense. Is that not irresponsible? Is that not disrespectful to God? You have learned some knowledge, understood some reasoning and logic, you have used these things and, furthermore, done so as a way to understand God. Do you think God feels upset when He hears you speak in that way? How can you try to know God using these methods? When you speak like that, does it not sound awkward? Therefore, when it comes to knowledge of God, one must be very cautious; speak only to the extent that you know God. Speak honestly and practically and do not adorn your words with bland compliments, and do not use flattery; God does not need it; this sort of thing comes from Satan. Satan's disposition is arrogant; Satan likes to be flattered and to hear nice words. Satan will be pleased and happy if people recite all the pleasant words they have learned and use them for Satan. But God does not need this; God does not need adulation or flattery and He does not require that people speak nonsense and praise Him blindly. God abhors and will not even listen to

praise and flattery that does not align with reality. So, when some people praise God insincerely, and blindly make vows and pray to Him, God does not listen at all. You must take responsibility for what you say. If you do not know something, just say so; if you do know something, express it in a practical way. So, as to what God's holiness specifically and actually entails, do you have a true understanding of it? (When I expressed rebelliousness, when I committed transgressions, I received God's judgment and chastisement, and therein I saw God's holiness. And when I encountered environments that didn't conform to my expectations, I prayed about these things and I sought God's intentions, and as God enlightened and guided me with His words, I saw God's holiness.) This is from your own experience. (From what God has said about it, I have seen what man has become after being corrupted and harmed by Satan. Nonetheless, God has given everything to save us and from this I see God's holiness.) This is a realistic manner of speaking; it is true knowledge. Are there any different ways of understanding this? (I see Satan's evil from the words it spoke to entice Eve into sinning and its temptation of the Lord Jesus. From the words with which God told Adam and Eve what they could and could not eat, I see that God speaks straightforwardly, cleanly, and trustworthily; from this I see God's holiness.) Having heard the above remarks, whose words most inspire you to say "amen" to? Whose fellowship was closest to our fellowship topic today? Whose words were most realistic? How was the fellowship of the last sister? (Good.) You say "amen" to what she said. What did she say that was right on target? (In the words the sister just spoke, I heard that God's word is straightforward and very clear, and that it is not at all like Satan's beating about the bush. I saw God's holiness in this.) This is part of it. Was it right? (Yes.) Very good. I see that you have gained something in these past two fellowships, but you must continue to work hard. The reason you must work hard is because understanding the essence of God is a very profound lesson; it is not something that one comes to understand overnight, or that one can express clearly with just a few words.

Every aspect of people's corrupt satanic disposition, knowledge, philosophy, people's thoughts and viewpoints, and certain personal aspects of individual people hinder them greatly from knowing God's essence; so when you hear these topics, some of them may be beyond your reach; some you may not understand, while some you may fundamentally not be able to match up with reality. Regardless, I have heard about your understanding of God's holiness and I know that in your hearts you are beginning to acknowledge what I have said and fellowshiped about God's holiness. I know that in your hearts your desire to understand the essence of God's holiness is starting to sprout. But what makes Me even happier is that some of you are already able to use the simplest words to describe your knowledge of God's holiness. Even though this is a simple thing to say and I have said this before, yet in the hearts of the majority of you, you have yet to accept these words, and indeed they have made no impression in your minds. Nonetheless, some of you have committed these words to memory. This is very good

and is a very promising start. I hope that you will continue to ponder and fellowship more and more on the topics that you think of as profound—or the topics that are beyond your reach. For those issues that are beyond your reach there will be someone to give you more guidance. If you engage in more fellowship regarding the areas that are within your reach now, the Holy Spirit will do His work and you will come to greater understanding. Understanding the essence of God and knowing the essence of God is of the utmost importance to people's entry into life. I hope that you do not ignore this or see it as a game, because knowing God is the foundation of man's faith and the key for man to pursue truth and attain salvation. If people believe in God yet do not know Him, if they only live in words and doctrines, it will never be possible for them to attain salvation, even if they act and live in accordance with the superficial meaning of the truth. That is to say, if you believe in God but do not know Him, then your faith is all for naught and contains nothing of reality. You understand, don't you? (Yes, we understand.) Our fellowship will end here for today.

January 4, 2014

God Himself, the Unique VI God's Holiness (III)

The topic we fellowshiped about last time was the holiness of God. Which aspect of God Himself does the holiness of God concern? Does it concern the essence of God? (Yes.) So what is the main aspect of God's essence that we addressed in our fellowship? Is it the holiness of God? The holiness of God is the unique essence of God. What was the main content of our fellowship last time? (The discernment of Satan's evil. That is, how Satan corrupts mankind using knowledge, science, traditional culture, superstition, and social trends.) This was the main topic that we discussed last time. Satan uses knowledge, science, superstition, traditional culture, and social trends to corrupt man; these are the ways—five of them in total—that Satan corrupts man. Which of these do you think Satan uses the most to corrupt man? Which is the one that is used to corrupt people most deeply? (Traditional culture. This is because satanic philosophies, such as the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, are deeply ingrained in our minds.) So, some brothers and sisters think the answer is "traditional culture." Does anyone have a different answer? (Knowledge. Knowledge will never let us worship God. It denies the existence of God, and denies the rule of God. That is to say, Satan tells us to begin studying from a young age, and that only by studying and gaining knowledge will we have bright prospects for our future and a happy fate.) Satan uses knowledge to control your future and fate, and then it leads you along by the nose; this is how you think Satan corrupts man most deeply. So, most of you think it is knowledge that Satan uses to corrupt man most deeply. Does anyone else have a different opinion? What about science or social trends, for example? Would anyone identify these as the answer? (Yes.) Today, I will fellowship again about the five ways in which Satan corrupts man, and once I am finished, I will ask you some more questions, so that we can see exactly which of these things Satan uses to corrupt man most deeply.

Five Ways in Which Satan Corrupts Man

a. Satan Uses Knowledge to Corrupt Man, and It Uses Fame and Gain to Control Him

Among the five ways in which Satan corrupts man, the first one we mentioned is knowledge, so let us take knowledge as our first topic for fellowship. Satan uses knowledge as bait. Listen closely: Knowledge is just a kind of bait. People are enticed to study hard and improve themselves day after day, to weaponize knowledge and arm themselves with it, and then to use knowledge to open the gateway to science; in other words, the more knowledge you gain, the more you will understand. Satan tells people all of this; it tells people to foster lofty ideals as they are learning knowledge, instructing them to build up ambitions and aspirations. Unbeknownst to man, Satan conveys many messages like this, causing people to unconsciously feel that these things are correct or

beneficial. Unknowingly, people set foot upon this path, unknowingly led onward by their own ideals and ambitions. Step by step, they unwittingly learn from the knowledge given by Satan the ways in which great or famous people think. They also learn some things from the deeds of people who are considered heroes. What is Satan advocating for man in the deeds of these heroes? What does it want to instill in man? That man must be patriotic, have national integrity, and be heroic of spirit. What does man learn from historical stories or biographies of heroic figures? To have a sense of personal loyalty, to be prepared to do anything for one's friends and brothers. Within this knowledge of Satan, man unknowingly learns many things which are not positive at all. In the midst of man's unawareness, seeds prepared by Satan are planted in people's immature minds. These seeds make them feel that they ought to be great people, ought to be famous, ought to be heroes, to be patriotic, be people who love their families, and be people who will do anything for a friend and have a sense of personal loyalty. Seduced by Satan, they unknowingly walk the road it has prepared for them. As they go down this road, they are forced to accept Satan's rules of living. Completely unaware, they develop their own rules that they live by, but these are nothing more than Satan's rules, which it has forcefully instilled in them. Satan makes them, during the learning process, foster their own objectives and determine their own life goals, rules to live by, and direction in life, all the while instilling in them the things of Satan, using stories, biographies, and all other means possible to entice people, little by little, until they take the bait. In this way, during the course of their learning, some come to prefer literature, some economics, others astronomy or geography. Then there are some who come to like politics, some who like physics, some chemistry, and even others still who prefer theology. These are all parts of the greater whole that is knowledge. In your hearts, each of you knows what these things are really about; each one of you has had contact with them before. Each of you is capable of talking on and on endlessly about one or another of these branches of knowledge. And so it is clear how deeply this knowledge has entered the minds of men; it is plain to see the position occupied by this knowledge in people's minds and how deep an effect it has on them. Once someone develops affection for a facet of knowledge, when a person has fallen deeply in love with it, they then unknowingly develop ambitions: Some people want to be writers, some want to be literary authors, some want to make a career out of politics, and some want to engage in economics and become businesspeople. Then there is a portion of people who want to be heroes, to be great or famous. Regardless of what kind of person someone wants to be, their goal is to take this method of learning knowledge and use it for their own ends, to realize their own desires, their own ambitions. No matter how good it sounds—whether they want to achieve their dreams, to not waste their life, or to have a certain career—they foster these lofty ideals and ambitions, but what is it all essentially for? Have you ever considered this question before? Why does Satan act in this way? What is Satan's purpose in instilling these things in man? Your hearts must be clear on this question.

Now let us talk about how Satan uses knowledge to corrupt man. First, we have to have a clear understanding of these things: With knowledge, what does Satan want to give man? What kind of road does it want to lead man down? (The road of resisting God.) Yes, that is certainly it—to resist God. You can see then that this is a consequence of people obtaining knowledge—they begin to resist God. So what are Satan's sinister motives? You are not clear about this, are you? During the process of man's learning of knowledge, Satan employs all manner of methods, whether it be telling stories, simply giving them some individual piece of knowledge, or allowing them to satisfy their desires or ambitions. What road does Satan want to lead you down? People think there is nothing wrong with learning knowledge, that it is entirely natural. To put it in a way that sounds appealing, to foster lofty ideals or to have ambitions is to have drive, and this should be the right path in life. Is it not a more glorious way for people to live if they can realize their own ideals, or successfully establish a career? By doing these things, one can not only honor one's ancestors but also has the chance to leave one's mark on history—is this not a good thing? This is a good thing in the eyes of worldly people, and to them it should be proper and positive. Does Satan, however, with its sinister motives, take people on to this kind of road and that's all there is to it? Of course not. In fact, no matter how lofty man's ideals are, no matter how realistic man's desires are or how proper they may be, all that man wants to achieve, all that man seeks for, is inextricably linked to two words. These two words are vitally important to the life of every person, and they are things Satan intends to instill in man. What are these two words? They are "fame" and "gain." Satan uses a very subtle kind of method, a method very much in concert with people's notions, which is not at all radical, through which it causes people to unknowingly accept its way of living, its rules to live by, and to establish life goals and their direction in life, and in doing so they also unknowingly come to have ambitions in life. No matter how grand these life ambitions may seem, they are inextricably linked to "fame" and "gain." Everything that any great or famous person—all people, in fact follow in life relates only to these two words: "fame" and "gain." People think that once they have fame and gain, they can then capitalize on those things to enjoy high status and great wealth, and to enjoy life. They think fame and gain are a kind of capital that they can use to obtain a life of pleasure-seeking and wanton enjoyment of the flesh. For the sake of this fame and gain which mankind so covets, people willingly, albeit unknowingly, hand over their bodies, minds, all that they have, their futures and their destinies, to Satan. They do so without even a moment's hesitation, ever ignorant of the need to recover all that they have handed over. Can people retain any control over themselves once they have taken refuge in Satan in this way and become loyal to it? Certainly not. They are completely and utterly controlled by Satan. They have completely and utterly sunk into a quagmire, and are unable to free themselves. Once someone is mired in fame and gain, they no longer seek that which is bright, that which is righteous, or those things that are beautiful and good. This is because the seductive power that fame and gain have over people is too great; they become things for people to pursue throughout their lives and even for all eternity without end. Is this not true? Some people will say that learning knowledge is nothing more than reading books or learning a few things that they do not already know so as not to lag behind the times or be left behind by the world. Knowledge is only learned so they can put food on the table, for their own future, or to provide the basic necessities. Is there any person who would endure a decade of hard study just for the basic necessities, just to resolve the issue of food? No, there are none like this. So why does a person suffer these hardships for all these years? It is for fame and gain. Fame and gain are waiting for them in the distance, beckoning them, and they believe that only through their own diligence, hardships and struggles can they follow the road that will lead them to attain fame and gain. Such a person must suffer these hardships for their own future path, for their future enjoyment and to gain a better life. What on earth is this knowledge—can you tell Me? Is it not the rules and philosophies for living that Satan instills in man, such as "Love the Party, love the country, and love your religion" and "A wise man submits to circumstances"? Is it not life's "lofty ideals" instilled into man by Satan? Take, for example, the ideas of great people, the integrity of the famous or the brave spirit of heroic figures, or take the chivalry and kindness of the protagonists and swordsmen in martial arts novels—are these not all ways in which Satan instills these ideals? These ideas influence one generation after another, and the people of each generation are brought to accept these ideas. They constantly struggle in the pursuit of "lofty ideals" that they will even sacrifice their lives for. This is the means and approach by which Satan uses knowledge to corrupt people. So after Satan leads people upon this path, are they able to obey and worship God? And are they able to accept God's words and pursue the truth? Absolutely not—because they have been led astray by Satan. Let us look again at the knowledge, thoughts, and opinions instilled in people by Satan: Do these things contain the truths of obedience to God and worship of God? Are there the truths of fearing God and shunning evil? Are there any of the words of God? Is there anything in them that relates to the truth? Not at all—these things are totally absent. Can you be sure that the things instilled in people by Satan contain no truth? You dare not—but no matter. So long as you recognize that "fame" and "gain" are the two key words that Satan uses to entice people onto the path of evil, then that is enough.

Let us briefly review what we have discussed so far: What does Satan use to keep man firmly within its control? (Fame and gain.) So, Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the

sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain. Looking now at Satan's actions, are its sinister motives not utterly detestable? Maybe today you still cannot see through Satan's sinister motives because you think one cannot live without fame and gain. You think that if people leave fame and gain behind, they will no longer be able to see the way ahead, no longer be able to see their goals, that their futures will become dark, dim and gloomy. But, slowly, you will all one day recognize that fame and gain are monstrous shackles that Satan uses to bind man. When that day comes, you will thoroughly resist Satan's control and thoroughly resist the shackles Satan uses to bind you. When the time comes that you wish to throw off all the things Satan has instilled in you, you will then make a clean break with Satan and you will truly loathe all that Satan has brought to you. Only then will mankind have a real love and yearning for God.

b. Satan Uses Science to Corrupt Man

We have just talked about how Satan uses knowledge to corrupt man, so next let us fellowship about how Satan uses science to corrupt man. Firstly, Satan uses the name of science to satisfy man's curiosity, man's desire to explore science and probe mysteries. In the name of science, Satan satisfies man's material needs and man's demand to continually improve their quality of life. Thus, it is with this pretext that Satan uses science to corrupt man. Is it only man's thinking or man's mind that Satan corrupts using science in this way? Of the people, events, and things in our surroundings that we can see and that we come into contact with, what else of these does Satan corrupt with science? (The natural environment.) Correct. It seems you have been deeply harmed by this, and deeply affected. Besides using all the various findings and conclusions of science to deceive man, Satan also uses science as a means to carry out wanton destruction and exploitation of the living environment that was given to man by God. It does this under the pretext that if man carries out scientific research, then man's living environment and quality of life will continually improve, and furthermore that the purpose of scientific development is to cater to people's daily increasing material needs and their need to continually improve their quality of life. This is the theoretical basis of Satan's development of science. However, what has science brought to mankind? Has our living environment—and the living environment of all mankind—not been defiled? Has the air that man breathes not been defiled? Has the water that we drink not been defiled? Is the food that we eat still organic and natural? Most grains and vegetables are genetically modified, they have been grown with fertilizer, and some are variants created using science. The vegetables and fruit we eat are no longer natural. Even natural eggs are no longer easy to find, and eggs no longer taste the way they used to, having already been processed by Satan's so-called science. Looking at the big picture, the entire atmosphere has been destroyed and polluted; mountains, lakes, forests, rivers, oceans,

and everything above and below ground have all been ruined by so-called scientific achievements. In brief, the entire natural environment, the living environment given to mankind by God, has been destroyed and ruined by so-called science. Although there are many people who have obtained what they always hoped for in terms of the quality of life they seek, satisfying both their desires and their flesh, the environment man lives in has essentially been destroyed and ruined by the various "achievements" brought on by science. Now, we no longer have the right to breathe a single breath of clean air. Is this not mankind's sorrow? Is there any happiness left to speak of for man, when they must live in this kind of space? This space and living environment in which man lives was, from the very beginning, created by God for man. The water people drink, the air people breathe, the various foods people eat, as well as plants and living beings, and even the mountains, lakes, and oceans—every part of this living environment was given to man by God; it is natural, operating in accordance with a natural law laid down by God. Without science, people would still follow the methods bestowed upon them by God, they would be able to enjoy all that is pristine and natural, and they would be happy. Now, however, all of this has been destroyed and ruined by Satan; man's fundamental living space is no longer pristine. But no one is able to recognize what caused this or how this came about, and many more people approach science and understand it through the ideas instilled in them by Satan. Is this not utterly detestable and pitiable? With Satan now having taken the space in which people exist, as well as their living environment, and corrupted them into this state, and with mankind continuing to develop in this way, is there any need for God to personally destroy these people? If people continue to develop in this way, what direction will they take? (They will be exterminated.) How will they be exterminated? In addition to people's greedy search for fame and gain, they continually carry out scientific exploration and dive deep into research, and then ceaselessly act in such a way as to satisfy their own material needs and desires; what then are the consequences for man? First of all, the ecological balance is broken, and when this happens, people's bodies, their internal organs, are tainted and damaged by this unbalanced environment, and various infectious diseases and plagues spread across the world. Is it not true that this is now a situation that man has no control over? Now that you understand this, if mankind does not follow God, but always follows Satan in this way—using knowledge to continually enrich themselves, using science to ceaselessly explore the future of human life, using this kind of method to continue living—can you recognize how this will end for mankind? Mankind will naturally become extinct: Step-by-step, mankind advances toward destruction, toward their own destruction! Is this not bringing destruction upon themselves? And is it not the consequence of scientific progress? It now seems as though science is a kind of magic potion that Satan has prepared for man, so that when you try to discern things you do so in a foggy haze; no matter how hard you look, you cannot see things clearly, and no matter how hard you try, you cannot figure them out. Satan, however, uses the name of science to whet your appetite and lead you by the nose, one foot in front of the other, toward the abyss and death. And this being the case, people will clearly see that actually, the destruction of man is wrought by the hand of Satan—Satan is the ringleader. Is this not so? (Yes, it is.) This is the second way that Satan corrupts mankind.

c. Satan Uses Traditional Culture to Corrupt Man

Traditional culture is the third way that Satan corrupts man. There are many similarities between traditional culture and superstition, but the difference is that traditional culture has certain stories, allusions, and sources. Satan has fabricated and invented many folk stories or stories that appear in history books, leaving people with deep impressions of traditional cultural or superstitious figures. For example, in China there are the "Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea," "Journey to the West," the Jade Emperor, "Nezha Conquering the Dragon King," and "The Investiture of the Gods." Have these not become deeply rooted in the minds of man? Even if some of you do not know all the details, you still know the general stories, and it is this general content that sticks in your heart and your mind, so that you cannot forget them. These are various ideas or legends that Satan prepared for man long ago, and which have been disseminated at different times. These things directly harm and erode people's souls and put people under one spell after another. That is to say that once you have accepted such traditional culture, stories, or superstitious things, once they are established in your mind, and once they are stuck in your heart, then it is like you are spellbound—you become enmeshed and influenced by these cultural trappings, these ideas and traditional stories. They influence your life, your outlook on life, and your judgment of things. Even more so they influence your pursuit for the true path of life: This is indeed a wicked spell. Try as you might, you cannot shake them off; you chop at them but you cannot chop them down; you beat at them but you cannot beat them away. Furthermore, after people are unknowingly put under this kind of spell, they unknowingly begin to worship Satan, fostering the image of Satan in their hearts. In other words, they establish Satan as their idol, an object for them to worship and look up to, even going so far as to regard it as God. Unknowingly, these things are in people's hearts, controlling their words and deeds. Moreover, you first regard these stories and legends to be false, but then you unknowingly acknowledge their existence, making of them real figures and turning them into real, existing objects. In your unawareness, you subconsciously receive these ideas and the existence of these things. You also subconsciously receive devils, Satan, and idols into your own home and into your own heart—this is indeed a spell. Do these words resonate with you? (Yes.) Are there any among you who have burned incense and worshiped Buddha? (Yes.) So what was the purpose of burning incense and worshiping Buddha? (Praying for peace.) Thinking about it now, is it not absurd to pray to Satan for peace? Does Satan bring peace? (No.) Do you not see how ignorant you were then? That kind of behavior is absurd, ignorant and naive, is it not? Satan only concerns itself

with how to corrupt you. Satan cannot possibly give you peace, only a temporary respite. But to gain this respite you must take a vow, and if you break your promise or the vow that you have made to Satan, then you will see how it torments you. In making you take a vow, it actually wants to control you. When you prayed for peace, did you obtain peace? (No.) You did not obtain peace, but on the contrary your efforts brought misfortune and unending disasters—truly a boundless ocean of bitterness. Peace is not within Satan's domain, and this is the truth. This is the consequence that feudal superstition and traditional culture have brought mankind.

d. Satan Uses Social Trends to Corrupt Man

The last way in which Satan corrupts and controls man is through social trends. Social trends cover many aspects, including various areas such as worshiping famous and great figures, as well as film and music idols, celebrity worship, online games, etc. these are all part of social trends, and there is no need to go into detail here. We will only talk about the ideas that social trends bring about in people, the way they cause people to conduct themselves in the world, and the life goals and outlook that they bring about in people. These are very important; they can control and influence people's thoughts and opinion. These trends arise one after another, and they all carry an evil influence that continually debases mankind, causing people to lose conscience, humanity and reason, weakening their morals and their quality of character ever more, to the extent that we can even say that the majority of people now have no integrity, no humanity, and neither do they have any conscience, much less any reason. So what are these social trends? They are trends that you cannot see with the naked eye. When a new trend sweeps through the world, perhaps only a small number of people are on the cutting edge, acting as the trendsetters. They start off doing some new thing, then accepting some kind of idea or some kind of perspective. The majority of people, however, will be continually infected, attracted, and assimilated by this trend in a state of unawareness, until they all unknowingly and involuntarily accept it and become submerged in it and controlled by it. One after another, such trends cause people, who are not of sound body and mind, do not know what the truth is, and cannot differentiate between positive and negative things, to happily accept them as well as the life views and values that come from Satan. They accept what Satan tells them about how to approach life and the way to live that Satan "bestows" on them, and they have neither the strength nor the ability, much less the awareness, to resist. So how to recognize such trends? I have chosen a simple example that you may gradually come to understand. For example, people in the past ran their business so that nobody was cheated; they sold items at the same price regardless of who was buying. Is not some element of good conscience and humanity conveyed here? When people conducted their business like this, in good faith, it can be seen that they still had some conscience and some humanity at that time. But with man's ever-increasing demand for money,

people unknowingly came to love money, gain, and pleasure more and more. Do people not prioritize money more than they used to? When people view money as very important, they unknowingly begin to attach less importance to their reputation, their renown, their good name and their integrity, do they not? When you engage in business, you see others getting rich by cheating people. Although the money earned is ill-gotten, they become richer and richer. Seeing all that their family enjoys upsets you: "We're both in business but they got rich. Why can't I make a lot of money? I can't take this—I must find a way to make more cash." After that, all you think about is how to make your fortune. Once you have given up on the belief that "money should be earned with conscience, by tricking no one," then, driven by your own interests, your way of thinking gradually changes, as do the principles behind your actions. When you cheat someone for the first time, you feel the reproach of your conscience, and your heart tells you, "Once this is done, this is the last time I will cheat someone. Always cheating people will result in retribution!" This is the function of man's conscience—to make you feel scruples and to reproach you, so that it feels unnatural when you cheat someone. But after you have successfully deceived someone, you see that you now have more money than you did before, and you think this method can be very beneficial for you. Despite the dull ache in your heart, you still feel like congratulating yourself on your success, and you feel somewhat pleased with yourself. For the first time, you approve of your own behavior, your own deceptive ways. Once man has been contaminated by this cheating, it is the same as someone who gets involved in gambling and then becomes a gambler. In your unawareness, you give approval to your own cheating behavior and accept it. In unawareness, you take cheating to be a legitimate commercial behavior and the most useful means for your survival and livelihood; you think that by doing this you can guickly make a fortune. This is a process: In the beginning, people cannot accept this type of behavior and they look down on this behavior and practice. Then they begin to experiment with this behavior themselves, trying it out in their own way, and their hearts begin to gradually transform. What kind of transformation is this? It is an approval and admission of this trend, of this idea instilled in you by the social trend. Without realizing it, if you do not cheat people when doing business with them, you feel you are worse off; if you do not cheat people, you feel as though you have lost something. Unknowingly, this cheating becomes your very soul, your backbone, and an indispensable type of behavior that is a principle in your life. After man has accepted this behavior and this thinking, has this not brought about a change in their heart? Your heart has changed, so has your integrity changed as well? Has your humanity changed? Has your conscience changed? Your whole being, from your heart to your thoughts, from inside to out, has changed, and this is a qualitative change. This change pulls you further and further away from God, and you become more and more closely aligned with Satan; you become more and more alike to Satan, with the result that Satan's corruption makes you a demon.

When looking at these social trends, would you say that they have a big influence on people? Do they have a deeply harmful effect on people? They do have a very deeply harmful effect on people. What aspects of man does Satan use each of these trends to corrupt? Satan chiefly corrupts man's conscience, sense, humanity, morals, and life perspectives. And do these social trends not gradually degrade and corrupt people? Satan uses these social trends to lure people one step at a time into a nest of devils, so that people caught up in social trends unknowingly advocate money and material desires, wickedness and violence. Once these things have entered the heart of man, what then does man become? Man becomes the devil, Satan! Why? Because, what psychological inclination exists in the heart of man? What does man revere? Man begins to take pleasure in wickedness and violence, showing no love for beauty or goodness, much less peace. People are not willing to live the simple life of normal humanity, but instead wish to enjoy high status and great wealth, to revel in the pleasures of the flesh, sparing no effort to satisfy their own flesh, with no restrictions, no bonds to hold them back; in other words, doing whatever they desire. So when man has become immersed in these kinds of trends, can the knowledge that you have learned help you to free yourself? Can your understanding of traditional culture and superstitions help you escape from this dire predicament? Can the traditional morals and ceremonies known to man help people exercise restraint? Take the Analects and the Tao Te Ching, for example. Can they help people pull their feet out of the quagmire of these evil trends? Absolutely not. Thus, man becomes more and more evil, arrogant, condescending, selfish and malicious. There is no longer any affection between people, no longer any love between family members, no longer any understanding among relatives and friends; human relations have become characterized by violence. Each and every person seeks to use violent methods to live among their fellow man; they seize their daily bread using violence; they win their positions and obtain their profits using violence, and they use violent and evil ways to do anything they want. Is this humanity not horrifying? It is, very much so: Not only did they crucify God, but would also slaughter all who follow Him because man is too wicked. After hearing all these things that I have just talked about, do you not think it terrifying to live in this environment, in this world, and amongst these kinds of people, within which Satan corrupts mankind? (Yes.) So, have you ever felt yourselves to be pitiful? You must feel it a little bit in this moment, do you not? (I do.) Hearing your tone, it seems as though you are thinking, "Satan has so many different ways of corrupting man. It seizes every opportunity and is everywhere we turn. Can man still be saved?" Can man still be saved? Can man save themselves? (No.) Can the Jade Emperor save man? Can Confucius save man? Can the Guanyin Bodhisattva save man? (No.) So who can save man? (God.) Some people, however, will raise in their hearts such questions as: "Satan harms us so wildly, in such a deranged frenzy, that we have no hope to live life, nor any confidence to live life. We all live in the midst of corruption, and every single person resists God anyway, and now our hearts have sunk as low as they can go. So where is God while Satan is corrupting us? What is God doing? Whatever God is doing for us, we never feel it!" Some people inevitably feel dejected and somewhat disheartened. To you, this feeling is very deep because all that I have been saying has been to allow people to slowly come to understand, to feel more and more that they are without hope, to feel more and more that they have been forsaken by God. But do not worry. Our fellowship topic for today, "the evil of Satan," is not our true theme. To talk about the essence of the holiness of God, however, we must first discuss how Satan corrupts man and the evil of Satan in order to make it clearer to people what kind of condition man is now in. One aim of talking about this is to allow people to know the evil of Satan, while the other is to allow people to understand more deeply what true holiness is.

Have I not talked in more detail about these things we have just discussed compared to last time? Is your understanding now a little deeper? (Yes.) I know that a lot of people now are expecting Me to say what exactly the holiness of God is, but as I talk about the holiness of God I will first talk about the deeds God does. You should all listen attentively. Afterward, I will ask you what exactly the holiness of God is. I will not tell you directly, but instead let you try to figure it out; I will give you space to figure it out. What do you think of this method? (It sounds good.) Then listen carefully as I go on.

Understanding God's Holiness Through What He Does to Man

Whenever Satan corrupts man or inflicts unbridled harm upon man, God does not stand idly by, and neither does He brush aside or turn a blind eye to those He has chosen. God understands with perfect clarity all that Satan does. No matter what Satan does, no matter what trend it causes to arise, God knows all that Satan is trying to do, and God does not give up on those He has chosen. Instead, without attracting any attention—secretly, silently—God does everything that is necessary. When God begins work on someone, when He has chosen someone, He does not proclaim this news to anyone, nor does He proclaim it to Satan, much less make any grand gesture. He just very quietly, very naturally, does what is necessary. First, He selects a family for you; your family background, your parents, your ancestors—all this, God decides in advance. In other words, God does not make these decisions on a whim; rather, He began this work long ago. Once God has chosen a family for you, He then chooses the date on which you will be born. Then, God watches as you are born and come crying into the world. He watches your birth, watches as you utter your first words, watches as you stumble and toddle your first steps as you learn how to walk. First you take one step and then you take another—and now you can run, jump, talk, and express your feelings.... As people grow up, Satan's gaze is fixed on every one of them, like a tiger eyeing its prey. But in doing His work, God has never been subject to any limitations arising from people, events or things, of space or time; He does what He should and what He must. In the process of growing up, you may encounter many things that are not to your liking,

such as illness and frustration. But as you walk this path, your life and your future are strictly under God's care. God gives you a genuine guarantee to last all your life, for He is right there beside you, guarding you and looking after you. You grow up unaware of this. You begin to come into contact with new things and start to get to know this world and this mankind. Everything is fresh and new to you. You have some things you enjoy doing. You live within your own humanity, you live within your own space and you have not the slightest perception about the existence of God. But God watches you every step of the way as you grow, and He watches you as you make every stride forward. Even when you are learning knowledge or studying science, God has never left your side for a single step. You are just the same as other people in that, in the course of getting to know the world and engage with it, you have established your own ideals, you have your own hobbies, your own interests, and you also harbor lofty ambitions. You often ponder your own future, often sketching the outline of how your future should look. But no matter what transpires along the way, God sees it all happening clearly. Maybe you yourself have forgotten your own past, but to God, there is no one who can understand you better than He. You live under God's gaze, growing up, maturing. During this period, God's most important task is something that no one ever perceives, something no one knows. God certainly does not tell anyone about it. So what is this most crucial thing? It can be said that it is the guarantee that God will save a person. This means that if God wants to save this person, He must do this. This task is vitally important to both man and God. Do you know what it is? It seems like you do not have any feeling about this, or any concept of it, so I will tell you. From the time you were born all the way up to now, God has carried out much work on you, but He does not give you an exhaustive account of everything He has done. God did not allow you to know this, and neither did He tell you. However, for mankind, everything He does is important. As far as God is concerned, it is something He must do. In His heart there is something important He needs to do that far exceeds any of these things. That is, from the time a person is born up to the present day, God must guarantee their safety. When you hear these words, you may feel as though you do not fully understand. You may ask, "Is this safety so important?" Well, what is the literal meaning of "safety"? Maybe you understand it to mean peace or maybe you understand it to mean never experiencing any disaster or calamity, to live well, to live a normal life. But in your hearts, you must know that it is not so simple. So what exactly is this thing that I have been talking about, that God has to do? What does safety mean to God? Is it really a guarantee of the normal meaning of "safety"? No. So what is it that God does? This "safety" means that you will not be devoured by Satan. Is this important? Not being devoured by Satan—does this concern your safety or not? Yes, this concerns your personal safety, and there can be nothing more important. Once you have been devoured by Satan, your soul and your flesh no longer belong to God. God will no longer save you. God forsakes souls and people who have been devoured by Satan. So I say the most important thing that God

has to do is to guarantee this safety of yours, to guarantee that you will not be devoured by Satan. This is very important, is it not? So why can you not answer? It seems like you are unable to feel God's great kindness!

God does much more besides guaranteeing people's safety, guaranteeing that they will not be devoured by Satan. He also does a great deal of preparatory work before choosing and saving someone. Firstly, God makes meticulous preparations regarding what kind of character you will have, what kind of family you will be born into, who your parents will be, how many brothers and sisters you will have, and what the situation, economic status, and conditions of the family you are born into will be. Do you know what kind of family the majority of God's chosen people are born into? Are they prominent families? We cannot say for sure that there are none who are born into prominent families. There may be some, but they are very few. Are they born into families of exceptional wealth, families of billionaires or multimillionaires? No, they are almost never born into this kind of family. So what kind of family does God arrange for most of these people? (Ordinary families.) So which families may be considered "ordinary families"? They include working families—that is, ones that depend on wages to survive, can afford the basic necessities, and are not overly well-off; they also include farming families. Farmers depend on planting crops for their food, have grain to eat and clothes to wear, and do not go hungry or freeze. Then there are some families that run small businesses, and some where the parents are intellectuals, and these can also be counted as ordinary families. There are also some parents who are office workers or minor government officials, who also cannot be counted as belonging to prominent families. Most are born into ordinary families, and this is all arranged by God. That is to say, first of all, this environment that you live in is not the family of substantial means that people might imagine, and this is a family decided for you by God, and the majority of people will live within the limits of this kind of family. So what about social status? The economic conditions of the majority of parents are average and they do not have high social status—for them it is good just to have a job. Do they include governors? Or national presidents? No, right? At most they are people such as small business managers or owners of small businesses. Their social status is middling, and their economic conditions are average. Another factor is the family's living environment. First of all, there are no parents among these families who would clearly influence their children into walking the path of divination and fortune telling; these are very few who engage in such things. Most parents are quite normal. At the same time that God chooses people, He sets up this kind of environment for them, which is greatly beneficial to His work of saving people. On the surface, it looks like God has done nothing particularly earthshaking for man; He just quietly and secretly proceeds to do all of the things that He does, humbly and in silence. But in fact, all that God does, He does in order to lay a foundation for your salvation, to prepare the road ahead and all the necessary conditions for your salvation. Next, God brings every person back before Him,

each at a specified time: It is then that you hear God's voice; it is then that you come before Him. By the time that this happens, some people have already become parents themselves, whilst others are still somebody's child. In other words, some people have gotten married and had children whilst some are still single, not yet having started their own families. But regardless of one's situation, God has already set the times when you will be chosen and when His gospel and words will reach you. God has set the circumstances, decided on a certain person or a certain context through which the gospel will be passed onto you, so that you may hear the words of God. God has already prepared for you all the necessary conditions. In this way, though man is unaware that it is happening, man comes before Him and returns to God's family. Man also unknowingly follows God and enters into each step of His work, entering into each step of God's way of work which He has prepared for man. What ways does God use when He does things for man at this time? First, the bare minimum is the care and protection that man enjoys. Apart from this, God sets out various people, events, and things so that through them man may see His existence and His deeds. For example, there are some people who believe in God because someone in their family is sick. When others preach the gospel to them, they start to believe in God, and this belief in God comes about because of the situation. So who arranged this situation? (God.) By means of this illness, there are some families where everybody is a believer, while there are others where only a few people in the family believe. On the surface, it may seem that someone in your family has an illness, but it is in fact a condition bestowed on you so that you may come before God—this is God's kindness. Because family life is hard for some people and they can find no peace, a chance opportunity may present itself—someone passes on the gospel and says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will have peace." Thus, unaware, they come to believe in God under very natural circumstances, so is this not a type of condition? And is the fact that their family is not at peace a grace granted them by God? There are also some who come to believe in God for other reasons. There are different reasons and different ways of belief, but no matter what reason brings you to believe in Him, it is all actually arranged and guided by God. At first, God employs various ways to choose you and to bring you into His family. This is the grace that God bestows on every single person.

In God's current stage of work in these, the last days, He no longer just bestows grace and blessings on man like He did before, nor does He coax man to move forward. During this stage of work, what has man seen from all the aspects of God's work that they have experienced? Man has seen God's love and God's judgment and chastisement. During this period of time, God provides for, supports, enlightens and guides man, so that man gradually comes to know His intentions, to know the words He speaks and the truth He bestows on man. When man is weak, when they are dispirited, when they have nowhere to turn, God will use His words to comfort, advise, and encourage man, so that man's small stature can gradually grow in strength, rise up in

positivity and become willing to cooperate with God. But when man disobeys God or resists Him, or when man reveals their corruption, God will show no mercy in chastening and disciplining man. However, God will show tolerance and patience for man's foolishness, ignorance, weakness and immaturity. In this way, through all the work God does for man, man gradually matures, grows up, and comes to know God's intentions, comes to know certain truths, to know what things are positive and what are negative, to know what evil and darkness are. God does not take a single approach of always chastening and disciplining man, but nor does He always show tolerance and patience. Rather He provides for each person in different ways at their different stages and according to their different statures and caliber. He does many things for man and at great cost; man perceives nothing of these things or of the cost, yet in practice all that He does is truly carried out on every single person. God's love is practical: Through the grace of God, man avoids one disaster after another, and all the while God shows tolerance time and again for man's weaknesses. The judgment and chastisement of God allow people to gradually come to know mankind's corruption and satanic essence. That which God provides, His enlightenment of man and His guidance all allow mankind to know more and more the essence of truth, and to increasingly know what people need, what road they should take, what they live for, the value and meaning of their lives, and how to walk the road ahead. All these things that God does are inseparable from His one original purpose. What, then, is this purpose? Why does God use these methods to carry out His work on man? What result does He want to achieve? In other words, what does He want to see in man? What does He want to obtain from man? What God wants to see is that man's heart can be revived. These methods that He uses to work on man are a continual effort to awaken the heart of man, to awaken man's spirit, to enable man to understand from where they came, who is guiding, supporting and providing for them, and who has allowed man to live until the present day; they are a means to enable man to understand who is the Creator, whom they should worship, what kind of road they should walk, and in what way man should come before God; they are a means to gradually revive the heart of man, so that man knows God's heart, understands God's heart, and comprehends the great care and thought behind His work to save man. When man's heart is revived, man no longer wishes to live with a degenerate, corrupt disposition, but wishes instead to pursue the truth in order to satisfy God. When man's heart has been awakened, man is then able to tear themselves fully away from Satan. No longer will they be harmed by Satan, no longer controlled or fooled by it. Instead, man can proactively cooperate in God's work and His words to satisfy the heart of God, thus attaining fear of God and shunning evil. This is the original purpose of God's work.

The discussion we just held about the evil of Satan makes everyone feel as though man lives amidst great unhappiness and that the life of man is beset with misfortune. But now when I am talking about the holiness of God and the work that He performs on man, how does that make you feel? (Very happy.) We can see now that everything

God does, all that He painstakingly arranges for man, is immaculate. Everything God does is without error, meaning it is faultless, needing no one to correct, advise, or make any changes to it. All that God does for every individual is beyond doubt; He leads everyone by the hand, looks after you with every passing moment and has never once left your side. As people grow up in this kind of environment and with this kind of background, could we say that people in fact grow up in the palm of God's hand? (Yes.) So now do you still feel a sense of loss? Does anyone still feel dispirited? Does anyone feel that God has forsaken mankind? (No.) So what exactly has God done then? (He has kept watch over mankind.) The great thought and care that God puts into everything He does is beyond question. What is more, in carrying out His work, He has always done so unconditionally. He has never required that any one of you know the price that He pays for you so as to make you feel deeply grateful to Him. Has God ever required this of you? (No.) In the long course of human life, almost every individual has encountered many dangerous situations and faced many temptations. This is because Satan is standing beside you, its eyes constantly fixed on you. When disaster strikes you, Satan revels in this; when calamities befall you, when nothing goes right for you, when you become entangled in Satan's web, Satan takes great enjoyment from these things. As for what God is doing, He is protecting you with each passing moment, steering you away from one misfortune after another and from one disaster after another. This is why I say that everything man has—peace and joy, blessings and personal safety—is in fact all under God's control; He guides and decides the fate of every individual. But does God have an inflated notion of His position, as some people say? Does God declare to you, "I am the greatest of all. It is I that take charge of you. You must beg Me for mercy, and disobedience will be punished by death"? Has God ever threatened mankind in this way? (No.) Has He ever said, "Mankind is corrupt, so it does not matter how I treat them, and they may be treated in any which way; I do not need to make sound arrangements for them"? Does God think in this way? Has God acted in this way? (No.) On the contrary, God's treatment of each and every person is earnest and responsible. He treats you more responsibly even than you treat yourself. Is this not so? God does not speak idly, and neither does He flaunt His elevated position or flippantly deceive people. Instead He honestly and silently does the things He Himself needs to do. These things bring blessings, peace and joy to man. They bring man peacefully and happily into God's sight and into His family; then they live before God and accept God's salvation with the normal reason and thinking. So has God ever been duplicitous with man in His work? Has He ever made a false display of kindness, first fooling man with a few pleasantries and then turning His back? (No.) Has God ever said one thing and then done another? Has God ever made empty promises and boasted, telling people He can do this for them or help do that for them, but then vanished? (No.) There is no deceit in God, no falsity. God is faithful, and He is true in everything He does. He is the only One that people can count on; He is the God to

whom people can entrust their lives and everything they have. Since there is no deceit in God, could we say that God is the most sincere? (Yes.) Of course we can! Though the word "sincere" is too feeble, too human when applied to God, what other word is there for us to use? Such are the limits of human language. Though it is somewhat unfitting to call God "sincere," we will nonetheless use this word for the time being. God is faithful and sincere. So when we talk about these aspects, what are we referring to? Are we referring to the differences between God and man and the differences between God and Satan? Yes, we could say that. This is because man cannot see one trace of Satan's corrupt disposition in God. Am I correct in saying this? Amen? (Amen!) None of Satan's evil disposition is revealed in God. All that God does and reveals is wholly beneficial and helps man, is done wholly to provide for man, is full of life and gives man a road to follow and a direction to take. God is not corrupt and, furthermore, looking now at everything that God does, can we say that God is holy? Since God has none of the corrupt disposition of mankind, nor anything akin to the satanic essence of corrupt mankind, from this point of view we can totally say that God is holy. God does not display any corruption, and at the same time as God works, God reveals His own essence, which entirely confirms that God Himself is holy. Do you see this? To know God's holy essence, let us look at these two aspects for now: Firstly there is no trace of corrupt disposition in God, and secondly the essence of God's work on man allows man to see God's own essence, and this essence is entirely positive. For the things that every part of God's work brings to man are all positive. First of all, God requires man to be honest—is this not a positive thing? God gives man wisdom—is this not positive? God makes man able to discern between good and evil—is this not positive? He allows man to understand the meaning and value of human life—is this not positive? He allows man to see into the essence of people, events, and things in accordance with truth—is this not positive? It is. And the result of all of this is that man is no longer deceived by Satan, will no longer continue to be harmed or controlled by Satan. In other words, these things allow people to completely free themselves from the corruption of Satan, and therefore gradually walk the path of fearing God and shunning evil. How far have you walked on this path now? It is hard to say, is it not? But at the least do you now have an initial understanding of how Satan corrupts man, of which things are evil and which things are negative? You are at the least now walking the right path in life. Is this safe to say? It is, completely.

There is something that must be fellowshiped about the holiness of God. Based on all that you have heard and received, who among you can say what the holiness of God is? What does the holiness of God of which I speak refer to? Think about it for a second. Is the holiness of God His truthfulness? Is the holiness of God His faithfulness? Is the holiness of God His selflessness? Is it His humility? His love for man? God freely bestows truth and life on man—is this His holiness? They are, all of them. All this that God reveals is unique and does not exist within corrupt humanity, and nor can it be seen

in humanity. Not the slightest trace of it can be seen during the process of Satan's corruption of man, neither in the corrupt disposition of Satan nor in the essence or nature of Satan. All that God has and is, is unique; only God Himself has and is possessed of this kind of essence. At this point in our discussion, have any of you seen among mankind anyone as holy as what I have just described? (No.) So is there anyone this holy amongst the idols, the famous, or the great of mankind whom you worship? (No.) So when we say that God's holiness is unique, is this an exaggeration? Indeed it is not. Furthermore, God's holy uniqueness also has a practical side. Is there any discrepancy between the holiness I speak of now and the holiness that you previously thought of and imagined? (Yes.) There is a very large discrepancy. What do people often mean when they talk about holiness? (Some outward behaviors.) When people say that a behavior or some other thing is holy, they say this only because they see it as pure or pleasant to the senses. However, these things invariably lack the real substance of holiness—this is the aspect of the doctrine. Aside from this, what is referred to by the practical aspect of the holiness that people conceive of in their minds? Is it mostly what they imagine or judge it to be? For example, some Buddhists pass away whilst practicing, departing while they sit there asleep. Some people say they have become holy and flown to heaven. This is also a product of imagination. Then there are others who think that a fairy floating down from heaven is holy. Actually, people's concept of the word "holy" has always been just a kind of hollow fantasy and theory, with fundamentally no real substance to it, and moreover nothing to do with the essence of holiness. The essence of holiness is true love, but more than this, it is the essence of truth, righteousness and light. The word "holy" is only appropriate when applied to God; nothing in creation is worthy of being called "holy." Man must understand this. From now on, we will only apply the word "holy" to God. Is this appropriate? (Yes, it is.)

The Tricks That Satan Employs to Corrupt Man

Let us now go back to talk about what means Satan employs to corrupt man. We have just talked about the various ways in which God works on man, and which every one of you can experience for yourselves, so I will not speak in too much detail. But in your hearts, it is perhaps unclear what tricks and strategies Satan employs to corrupt man, or at the very least you don't have a specific understanding of them. Would it be beneficial for Me to speak about this again? Do you want to learn about this? Maybe some of you will ask: "Why talk about Satan again? The moment Satan is mentioned, we become angry, and when we hear its name we feel bothered all over." No matter how uncomfortable it makes you, you must face the facts. These things must be said plainly and made clear for the benefit of man's understanding; otherwise man cannot really break away from the influence of Satan.

We have previously discussed the five ways in which Satan corrupts man, which include Satan's tricks. The ways in which Satan corrupts man are merely the surface

layer; more insidious are the tricks hiding under this surface with which Satan achieves its goals. What are these tricks? Go ahead, summarize them. (It cheats, seduces and coerces.) The more of these tricks you list, the closer you get. It looks as though you have been deeply harmed by Satan and have strong feelings on the subject. (It also uses specious rhetoric. It influences and forcefully occupies people.) Forceful occupation—this leaves an especially deep impression. People are afraid of Satan's forceful occupation. Are there any other tricks? (It violently harms people, makes threats and enticing offers, and it lies.) Lying is one of the things it does. Satan lies so it can cheat you. What is the nature of lying? Is lying not the same as cheating? The goal of telling lies is in fact to cheat you. Are there any other tricks? Tell Me all of Satan's tricks that you know of. (It tempts, harms, blinds and deceives.) Most of you feel the same way about this deception. What else? (It controls man, takes hold of man, terrorizes man and keeps man from believing in God.) I know the overall meaning of the things that you are telling Me, and this is good. You all know something about this, so let us now make a summary of these tricks.

There Are Six Primary Tricks That Satan Employs to Corrupt Man

The first is control and coercion. That is, Satan will do everything possible to take control of your heart. What does "coercion" mean? It means using threatening and forceful tactics to make you obey it, making you think of the consequences if you do not obey. You are afraid and dare not defy it, so you then submit to it.

The second is cheating and trickery. What does "cheating and trickery" entail? Satan makes up some stories and lies, tricking you into believing them. It never tells you that man was created by God, but neither does it say directly that you were not made by God. It does not use the word "God" at all, but instead uses something else as a substitute, using this thing to deceive you so that you basically have no idea of the existence of God. Of course, this "trickery" includes many aspects, not just this one.

The third is forceful indoctrination. With what are people forcefully indoctrinated? Is forceful indoctrination done by man's own choice? Is it done with man's consent? Definitely not. Even if you do not consent, there is nothing you can do about it. In your unawareness, Satan indoctrinates you, instilling you with its thinking, its rules of life and its essence.

The fourth is intimidation and beguilement. That is, Satan employs various tricks to cause you to accept it, follow it and work in its service. It will do anything to achieve its goals. It sometimes bestows small favors on you, all the while luring you into committing sin. If you do not follow it, it will make you suffer and punish you, and use various ways to attack and plot against you.

The fifth is deception and paralysis. "Deception and paralysis" is when Satan instills in people some sweet-sounding words and ideas that align with their notions and seem plausible, to make it seem as though it is being considerate of people's fleshly situation,

of their lives and futures, when actually its only goal is to fool you. It then paralyzes you so that you do not know what is right and what is wrong, so that you are unwittingly tricked and thereby come under its control.

The sixth is the destruction of body and mind. What part of man does Satan destroy? Satan destroys your mind, making you powerless to resist, meaning that, little by little, your heart turns toward Satan in spite of yourself. It instills these things in you every day, every day using these ideas and cultures to influence and groom you, undermining your will little by little, so that eventually you no longer desire to be a good person, so that you no longer wish to stand up for what you call "righteousness." Unknowingly, you no longer have the willpower to swim against the current, but instead flow along with it. "Destruction" means Satan tormenting people so much that they become shadows of themselves, no longer human. This is when Satan strikes, seizing and devouring them.

Each one of these tricks that Satan employs to corrupt man renders man powerless to resist; any one of them can be deadly to man. In other words, anything Satan does and any tricks it employs can cause you to degenerate, can bring you under Satan's control and can mire you in a quagmire of evil and sin. Such are the tricks Satan employs to corrupt man.

We can say Satan is evil, but in order to confirm this, we must still look at what the consequences of Satan's corruption of man are and which dispositions and essences it brings to man. You all know something about this, so speak up. What are the consequences of Satan's corruption of people? Which corrupt dispositions do they express and reveal? (Arrogance and haughtiness, selfishness and despicableness, crookedness and deceitfulness, insidiousness and malice and a total lack of humanity.) On the whole, we can say they have no humanity. Now, let other brothers and sisters speak. (Once man has been corrupted by Satan, they are most typically arrogant and self-righteous, self-important and self-conceited, greedy and selfish. I feel that these are the most serious issues.) (After people have been corrupted by Satan, they stop at nothing to gain material items and wealth. And they even become hostile to God, resist God, disobey God, and they lose the conscience and reason that man should possess.) What you have said is all basically the same, albeit with some minor differences; some of you have simply included more minor details. To summarize, the things that stand out most about corrupt humanity are arrogance, deceitfulness, malice, and selfishness. However, you have all overlooked the same thing. People have no conscience, they have lost their reason and have no humanity—but there is another highly important thing that you have not mentioned, which is "betrayal." The ultimate consequence of these dispositions that exist in any man once they have been corrupted by Satan is their betrayal of God. No matter what God says to people or what work He does on them, they do not heed what they know to be the truth. That is, they no longer acknowledge God and they betray Him; this is the consequence of Satan's corruption of man. It is the same for all the corrupt dispositions of man. Among the ways that

Satan uses to corrupt man—the knowledge people learn, the science they know, their understanding of superstitions and traditional cultures, as well as social trends—is there any that man can use to tell what is righteous and what is unrighteous? Is there anything that can help man to know what is holy and what is evil? Are there any standards by which to measure these things? (No.) There are no standards and no basis that can help man. Even though people may know the word "holy," there is no one who actually knows what holy is. So can these things that Satan brings to man help them know the truth? Can they help man live with more humanity? Can they help man live in such a way that they are able to worship God more? (No.) It is obvious that they cannot help man worship God or understand the truth, nor can they help man know what holiness and evil are. Conversely, man becomes more and more degenerate, straying further and further from God. This is the reason why we say Satan is evil. Having dissected so much of Satan's evil substance, have you seen any element of holiness in Satan, either in its substance or in your understanding of its essence? (No.) That much is for certain. So have you seen any aspect of Satan's essence that shares any similarity with God? (No.) Does any expression of Satan share any similarity with God? (No.) So now I want to ask you: Using your own words, what exactly is the holiness of God? First of all, what are the words "the holiness of God" said in connection with? Are they said in connection with the essence of God? Or are they said in connection with some aspect of His disposition? (They are said in connection with the essence of God.) We must clearly identify a foothold with which to access our desired topic. These words are said in connection with the essence of God. First of all, we have used Satan's evil as a foil to the essence of God, so have you seen any of Satan's essence in God? What about any of mankind's essence? (No, we haven't. God is not arrogant, not selfish and does not betray, and from this we see the holy essence of God revealed.) Is there anything else to add? (God has no trace of the corrupt disposition of Satan. What Satan has is entirely negative, while what God has is nothing but positive. We can see that God has always been at our side, watching over us and protecting us, from the time when we were very small, all throughout our lives and until the present day, and especially when we have been confused and lost our way. There is no deceit in God, no cheating. He speaks clearly and plainly, and this too is the true essence of God.) Very good! (We can see none of the corrupt disposition of Satan in God, no duplicity, no boasting, no empty promises and no deceit. God is the only One that man can believe in. God is faithful and sincere. From the work of God, we can see that God tells people to be honest, gives them wisdom, makes them able to tell good from evil and have discernment of various people, events and things. In this we can see God's holiness.) Have you finished? Are you satisfied with what you have said? How much understanding of God is really in your hearts? And how much do you comprehend the holiness of God? I know that each and every one of you has in your heart some level of perceptive understanding, because every

individual can feel God's work on them and, in varying degrees, they obtain many things from God: Grace and blessings, enlightenment and illumination and God's judgment and chastisement, and because of these things, man gains some simple understanding of the essence of God.

Although the holiness of God that we are discussing today may seem strange to most people, regardless of this, we have now begun this topic, and as you walk the road ahead you will gain a deeper understanding. It requires you to gradually feel and understand during your own experiencing. For now, your perceptive-based understanding of God's essence still requires a long period of time to learn, to confirm, to feel and to experience it, until one day you will know, from the very center of your heart, that "the holiness of God" means that God's essence is flawless, that God's love is selfless, all that God provides to man is selfless, and you will come to know that God's holiness is unblemished and irreproachable. These aspects of God's essence are not just words He uses to flaunt His status, but rather God uses His essence to treat each and every individual with quiet sincerity. In other words, the essence of God is not empty, nor is it theoretical or doctrinal, and it is certainly not a kind of knowledge. It is not a kind of education for man; instead it is the true revelation of God's own actions and the revealed essence of what God has and is. Man should know this essence and comprehend it, because everything God does and every word He says is of great value and great significance to every single person. When you come to comprehend the holiness of God, you can then really believe in God; when you come to comprehend the holiness of God, you can then really realize the true meaning of the words "God Himself, the Unique." You will no longer fantasize, thinking there are other paths besides this one that you could choose to walk, and you will no longer be willing to betray everything that God has arranged for you. Because the essence of God is holy, that means that only through God can you walk through life on the righteous path of light; only through God can you know the meaning of life; only through God can you live out real humanity and both possess and know the truth. Only through God can you obtain life from the truth. Only God Himself can help you shun evil and deliver you from the harm and control of Satan. Besides God, no one and nothing can save you from the sea of suffering so that you suffer no longer. This is determined by the essence of God. Only God Himself saves you so selflessly; only God is ultimately responsible for your future, for your destiny and for your life, and He arranges all things for you. This is something that nothing created or non-created can achieve. Because nothing created or non-created possesses an essence like the essence of God, no person or thing has the ability to save you or to lead you. This is the importance of God's essence to man. Perhaps you feel that these words I have said may help a little, in principle. But if you pursue the truth, if you love the truth, then you will come to experience how these words will not only change your destiny, but beyond that they will bring you to the right path of human life. You understand this, do you not? So do you now have

some interest in knowing the essence of God? (Yes.) It is good to know that you are interested. For today, this is where we will finish our fellowship topic of knowing the holiness of God.

* * *

I would like to talk to you about something that you did at the beginning of our gathering today that surprised Me. Some of you were perhaps nurturing a sense of gratitude, perhaps you were feeling grateful, and so your emotion brought about a corresponding action. What you did was not something that needs reproaching; it is neither right nor wrong. But I would like you to understand something. What is it that I want you to understand? First, I would like to ask you about what you did just now. Was it prostrating or kneeling to worship? Can anyone tell Me? (We believe it was prostrating.) You believe it was prostrating, so what then is the meaning of prostration? (Worship.) So then, what is kneeling to worship? I have not fellowshiped about this with you before, but today I feel it is necessary to do so. Do you prostrate at your usual gatherings? (No.) Do you prostrate when you say your prayers? (Yes.) Do you prostrate each time you pray, when the situation allows? (Yes.) That is good. But what I would like you to understand today is that God only accepts the genuflections of two types of people. We do not need to consult the Bible or the deeds and conduct of any spiritual figures. Instead, here and now, I will tell you something true. Firstly, prostration and kneeling to worship are not the same thing. Why does God accept the genuflections of those who prostrate themselves? It is because God calls someone to Him and summons this person to accept God's commission, so God will allow him to prostrate himself before Him. This is the first type of person. The second type is the kneeling to worship of someone who fears God and shuns evil. There are only these two types of people. So which type do you belong to? Are you able to say? This is the truth, though it may hurt your feelings a little. There is nothing to say about people's genuflections during prayer this is proper and as it should be, because when people pray it is mostly praying for something, opening their hearts to God and coming face to face with Him. It is communication and exchange, heart to heart with God. Worshiping on your knees should not be a mere formality. I do not mean to reproach you for what you have done today. I just want to make it clear to you so that you understand this principle—you know this, do you not? (Yes, we know.) I am telling you this so that this does not happen again. So, do people have any opportunity to prostrate and kneel before the face of God? It is not that there will never be this opportunity. Sooner or later the day will come, but the time is not now. Do you see? Does this make you upset? (No.) That is good. Maybe these words will motivate or inspire you so that you can know in your hearts the current predicament between God and man and what kind of relationship exists now between God and man. Although we have recently talked and exchanged some more, man's

understanding of God is still far from sufficient. Man still has a long way to go on this road of seeking to understand God. It is not My intention to make you do this as a matter of urgency, or to rush to express these kinds of aspirations or feelings. What you did today may reveal and express your true feelings, and I sensed them. So while you were doing it, I just wanted to stand up and give you My well wishes, because I wish you all to be well. So, in My every word and every action, I do My utmost to help you, to guide you, so that you can have the correct understanding and correct view of all things. You can comprehend this, can you not? (Yes.) That is good. Although people have some understanding of God's various dispositions, the aspects of what God has and is and the work God does, the majority of this understanding goes no further than reading words on a page, or understanding them in principle, or just thinking about them. What people lack the most is the real understanding and insight that comes from actual experience. Even though God uses various methods to awaken people's hearts, there is still a long road to walk before this can be accomplished. I do not want to see anyone feeling as though God has left them out in the cold, that God has abandoned them or turned His back on them. All I want to see is everyone on the road to pursuing the truth and seeking to understand God, boldly marching onward with unfaltering determination, without any misgivings or burdens. No matter what wrongs you have committed, no matter how far you have strayed or how seriously you have transgressed, do not let these become burdens or excess baggage that you have to carry with you in your pursuit of understanding God. Continue marching onward. At all times, God holds man's salvation in His heart; this never changes. This is the most precious part of the essence of God. Do you feel a little better now? (Yes.) I hope that you can take the correct approach to all things and to the words that I have spoken. Let us end this fellowship here, then. Goodbye!

January 11, 2014

God Himself, the Unique VII God Is the Source of Life for All Things (I)

An Overview of God's Authority, God's Righteous Disposition, and God's Holiness

When you have finished your prayers, do your hearts feel calm in the presence of God? (Yes.) If a person's heart can be calmed, they will be able to hear and understand the word of God and they will be able to hear and understand the truth. If your heart is unable to be calmed, if your heart is always adrift, or always thinking of other things, this will affect you when you attend gatherings to hear the word of God. What is at the heart of the matters we have been discussing? Let us all think back a little on the main points. Regarding knowing God Himself, the unique, in the first part, we discussed God's authority. In the second part, we discussed God's righteous disposition, and in the third part, we discussed God's holiness. Has the specific content we discussed each time left an impression on you? In the first part, "God's authority," what left the deepest impression on you? Which part had the strongest impact on you? (God first communicated the authority and might of the word of God; God is as good as His word and His word shall become true. This is the inherent essence of God.) (God's command to Satan was that it may only tempt Job, but may not take his life. From this we see the authority of God's word.) Is there anything else to add? (God used words to create the heavens and the earth and everything in them, and He spoke words to make a covenant with man and to put His blessings upon man. These are all examples of the authority of God's word. Then, we saw how the Lord Jesus commanded Lazarus to walk out from his tomb—this shows that life and death are under God's control, that Satan has no power to control life and death, and that whether God's work is done in flesh or in Spirit, His authority is unique.) This is an understanding you gained after hearing the fellowship. Speaking of God's authority, what is your understanding of the word "authority"? Within the scope of God's authority, what do people see of what God does and reveals? (We see God's almightiness and wisdom.) (We see that God's authority is ever-present and that it truly exists. We see God's authority on the large scale in His dominion over all things, and we see it on the small scale as He takes control of each individual human life. God actually plans and controls the six junctures of human life. Furthermore, we see that God's authority represents God Himself, the unique, and no created or non-created being may possess it. God's authority is a symbol of His status.) Your understanding of the "symbols of God's status and God's position" seems to be somewhat doctrinal. Do you have any essential understanding of God's authority? (God has watched over us and protected us since we were young, and we see God's authority in that. We were not aware of the dangers that lurked over us, but God was always protecting us behind the scenes. This is also God's authority.) Very good. Well said.

When we speak about God's authority, what is our focus, our main point? Why do we need to discuss this? The first purpose in discussing this is to establish in people's hearts God's status as the Creator and His position among all things. This is what people, at first, can be brought to know, to see, and to feel. What you see and what you feel come from God's actions, God's words, and God's control of all things. So, what true understanding do people gain from all that they see, learn, and know through God's authority? We have already discussed the first purpose. The second is to let people see God's power and wisdom through all that God has done and said and controlled with His authority. It is to allow you to see how powerful and how wise God is in His control of everything. Was this not the focus and the main point of our prior discussion of God's unique authority? Not much time has passed since that discussion and yet some of you have forgotten this, which proves that you have not gained deep understanding of God's authority. It could even be said that man has not seen the authority of God. Do you now have some understanding? When you see God exercising His authority, what do you truly feel? Have you truly felt God's power? (Yes.) When you read His words about how He created all things, you feel His power and you feel His omnipotence. When you see God's dominion over the fate of men, what do you feel? Do you feel His power and His wisdom? If God did not possess this power, if He did not possess this wisdom, would He be qualified to have dominion over all things and over the fate of men? God possesses the power and the wisdom, and so He has the authority. This is unique. Among all creation, have you ever seen a person or creature with power like God's? Is there anyone or anything with the power to create the heavens and earth and all things, to control them and have dominion over them? Is there anyone or anything that can rule over and lead all of humanity, that can be present everywhere at all times? (No, there is not.) Do you now understand the true meaning of God's unique authority? Do you now have some understanding of this? (Yes.) This concludes our look back at the topic of God's unique authority.

In the second part, we talked about God's righteous disposition. We did not discuss much within this topic, because, at this stage, God's work consists primarily of judgment and chastisement. In the Age of Kingdom, God's righteous disposition is revealed clearly and in great detail. He has spoken words He has never spoken from the time of creation; and in His words all people, all who read and experience His word, have seen His righteous disposition revealed. So, what is the main point of our discussion about God's righteous disposition? Do you comprehend it deeply? Do you understand it from experience? (God burned Sodom because the people at that time were deeply corrupt and provoked God's wrath. From this, we see God's righteous disposition.) First, let's take a look: If God had not destroyed Sodom, would you be able to know of His righteous disposition? You still would. You can see it in the words God has expressed in the Age of Kingdom, and in the judgment, chastisement, and curses He has directed at man. Can you see God's righteous disposition in His sparing of Nineveh? (Yes.) In the current

age, people can see some of God's mercy, love, and tolerance, and people can see it, too, in God's change of heart that follows man's repentance. Having raised these two examples to introduce our discussion of God's righteous disposition, it is quite clear to see that His righteous disposition has been revealed, yet in reality, the essence of God's righteous disposition is not limited to what is revealed in these two Bible stories. From what you have learned and seen and experienced in God's word and His work, what is God's righteous disposition as you see it? Speak from your own experiences. (In the environments God created for people, when people are able to seek out truth and act in accordance with God's will, God guides them, enlightens them, and enables them to feel brightened in their hearts. When people go against God and resist Him and do not act in accordance with His will, then there is great darkness inside them, as if God has forsaken them. Even when they pray, they do not know what to say to Him. But when they put aside their own notions and imaginings and become willing to cooperate with God and strive to better themselves, then they gradually become able to see God's smiling countenance. From this we experience the holiness of God's righteous disposition. God appears in the holy kingdom, but He conceals Himself in impure places.) (I see God's righteous disposition in the way He treats people. Our brothers and sisters are different in stature and caliber, and what God requires from each of us differs also. We are all able to receive the enlightenment of God to varying degrees, and in this, I see God's righteousness, because we humans are not capable of treating man in this way, but God is.) Now, you all have some practical knowledge that you can articulate.

Do you know what knowledge is the key to understanding God's righteous disposition? There is much that may be said from experience on this topic, but first there are a few main points that I must tell you. To understand God's righteous disposition, one must first understand God's feelings: what He hates, what He loathes, what He loves, to whom He is tolerant and merciful, and on what type of person He bestows that mercy. This is one main point. One must also understand that no matter how loving God is, no matter how much mercy and love He has for people, God does not tolerate anyone offending His status and position, nor does He tolerate anyone offending His dignity. Even though God loves people, He does not pamper them. He gives people His love, His mercy, and His tolerance, but He has never coddled them; God has His principles and His limits. Regardless of how much of God's love you have felt, regardless of how deep that love may be, you must never treat God as you would treat another person. While it is true that God treats people with the utmost intimacy, if a person views God as just another person, as if He were just another created being, like a friend or an object of worship, then God will hide His face from them and forsake them. This is His disposition, and people must not take this issue thoughtlessly. So, we often see words such as this spoken by God about His disposition: It does not matter how many roads you have traveled, how much work you have done or how much suffering you have endured, once you offend God's disposition, He will repay each of you based on what you have done. What this means is that God treats people with the utmost intimacy, yet people must not treat God as a friend or a relative. Do not call God your "pal." No matter how much love you have received from Him, no matter how much tolerance He has given you, you must never treat God as your friend. This is God's righteous disposition. Do you understand? Do I need to say more about this? Do you have any prior understanding of this matter? Generally speaking, this is the easiest mistake for people to make, regardless of whether they understand the doctrines or if they have never before contemplated this issue. When people offend God, it might not be because of one event or one thing they said, but rather because of an attitude they hold and a state they are in. This is a very frightening thing. Some people believe that they have an understanding of God, that they have some knowledge of Him, and they might even do some things that satisfy God. They begin to feel equal to God and that they have cleverly maneuvered themselves into a friendship with God. These types of feelings are terribly wrong. If you do not have a deep understanding of this—if you do not understand this clearly—then you will very easily offend God and offend His righteous disposition. You understand this now, yes? Is not God's righteous disposition unique? Could it ever be the equivalent of the character or the moral standing of a man? It never could. So, you must not forget that, no matter how God treats people nor how He thinks of people, God's position, authority, and status do not ever change. For mankind, God is always the Lord of all things and the Creator.

What have you learned about the holiness of God? In that part about "God's holiness," besides the fact that Satan's wickedness is used as a foil, what was the main content of our discussion about the holiness of God? Is it not what God has and is? Is what God has and is unique to God Himself? (Yes.) It is that which created beings do not possess. This is why we say the holiness of God is unique. This is something that you should be able to understand. We held three meetings on the subject of the holiness of God. Can you describe in your own words, with your own understanding, what you believe God's holiness is? (The last time God communicated with us we bowed down before Him. God fellowshiped the truth to us about prostrating and bowing down to worship Him. We saw that bowing down to worship Him before meeting His requirements was not in accord with His will, and from this we saw the holiness of God.) Very true. Is there anything else? (In God's words to mankind, we see that He speaks plainly and clearly. He is straight and to the point. Satan speaks in a roundabout way and is full of lies. From what happened last time when we lay prostrate before God, we saw that His words and His actions are always principled. He is always clear and concise when He tells us how we should act, how we should observe, and how we should practice. But people are not this way. Since mankind's corruption by Satan, they have acted and spoken with their own personal motives and objectives and their own personal desires in mind. From the way God looks after, cares for and protects mankind, we see that all that God does is positive and clear. It is in this way that we see the essence of God's

holiness revealed.) Well put! Does anyone else have anything to add? (Through God's exposure of Satan's evil essence, we see God's holiness, we gain more knowledge of Satan's evil, and we see the source of mankind's suffering. In the past, we were unaware of man's suffering under the domain of Satan. Only after God revealed this did we see that all the suffering that comes from the pursuit of fame and fortune is the work of Satan. Only then did we feel that the holiness of God is the true salvation of mankind.) Is there anything else to add to that? (Mankind, which is corrupt, lacks true knowledge of and love for God. Because we don't understand the essence of God's holiness, and because, when we prostrate and bow down before Him in worship, we do so with impure thoughts and ulterior motives and purposes, God is displeased. We can see that God is different from Satan; Satan wants people to adore and flatter it, to prostrate and bow down to worship it. Satan has no principles. From this too, I am made aware of God's holiness.) Very good! Now that we have fellowshiped about God's holiness, do you see God's perfection? Do you see how God is the source of all positive things? Are you able to see how God is the embodiment of truth and justice? Do you see how God is the source of love? Do you see how all that God does, all that He expresses, and all that He reveals is flawless? (We do.) These are the main points of what I have said about the holiness of God. Today, these words may seem like mere doctrine to you, but one day, when you experience and witness the true God Himself from His word and His work, you will say from the bottom of your heart that God is holy, that God is different from mankind, and that His heart, disposition, and essence are all holy. This holiness allows man to see God's perfection and to see that the essence of God's holiness is immaculate. The essence of His holiness determines that He is God Himself, the unique, and it also both allows man to see and proves that He is the unique God Himself. Is this not the main point? (It is.)

Today we have conducted an overview of several topics from previous fellowships. This concludes today's overview. I hope that all of you will take to heart the main points of each item and topic. Do not think of them as mere doctrine; when you have some spare time, really read through them and ponder them. Remember them in your heart and bring them into reality—then you will truly experience all that I have said about the reality of God's revealing His disposition and revealing what He has and is. However, if you only jot them down in your notebook and do not read through them or think them over, then you will never gain them for yourself. You understand now, yes? After having communicated on these three topics, once people have gained a general—or even specific—understanding of God's status, essence, and disposition, will their understanding of God be complete? (No.) Now, in your own understanding of God, are there any other areas where you feel you need a deeper understanding? That is to say, now that you have gained an understanding of God's authority, His righteous disposition, and His holiness, perhaps His unique status and position are established in your mind; yet it remains for you to see, understand, and deepen your knowledge of His actions,

His power, and His essence through your own experience. Now that you have listened to these fellowships, in your hearts an article of faith is more or less established: God truly exists, and it is a fact that He administers all things. No one may offend His righteous disposition; His holiness is a certainty that no one may question. These are facts. These fellowships allow the status and position of God to have a foundation in the hearts of man. Once this foundation has been established, people must try to understand more.

Story 1: A Seed, the Earth, a Tree, the Sunlight, the Birds, and Man

Today I will fellowship about a new topic with you. What is this topic? Its title is: "God Is the Source of Life for All Things." Does this topic sound slightly too big? Does it feel a little beyond your reach? "God Is the Source of Life for All Things"—this topic may strike people as somewhat remote, but it must be understood by all who follow God, because it is inextricably linked to each person's knowledge of God and their being able to satisfy and revere Him. That is why I am going to fellowship about this topic. It is quite possible that people have a simple, prior understanding of this topic, or perhaps they are aware of it on some level. This knowledge or awareness may, in some people's minds, be accompanied by a simple or shallow degree of understanding. Others may have had some special experiences in their hearts that led them to a deep, personal encounter with this topic. But such prior knowledge, whether deep or superficial, is one-sided and not sufficiently specific. So, this is why I have chosen this topic for fellowship: to help you arrive at a deeper and more specific understanding. I will use a special method to fellowship with you about this topic, a method we have not used before, one that you may find a bit unusual, or a bit uncomfortable. You will know what I mean afterward. Do you like stories? (We do.) Well, it seems My choice to tell stories is a good one, since you all like them so much. Now, let us begin. There is no need for you to take notes. I ask that you be calm, and not fidget. You may close your eyes if you feel you may be distracted by your surroundings or the people around you. I have a wonderful story to tell you. This is a story about a seed, the earth, a tree, the sunlight, the birds, and man. Who are its main characters? (A seed, the earth, a tree, the sunlight, the birds, and man.) Is God one of them? (No.) Even so, I'm sure you will feel refreshed and satisfied once you've heard this story. Now, please listen quietly.

A small seed fell to the earth. A great rain fell, and the seed grew a tender sprout, while its roots delved slowly into the soil below. The sprout grew tall in time, enduring cruel winds and harsh rains, witnessing the changing of the seasons as the moon waxed and waned. In the summer, the earth brought forth gifts of water so that the sprout might endure the season's scorching heat. And because of the earth, the sprout was not overwhelmed by heat, and thus the worst of the summer heat passed. When winter came, the earth enveloped the sprout in its warm embrace, and earth and sprout held one another tightly. The earth warmed the sprout, and thus it survived the season's bitter cold, unharmed by wintry gales and snowstorms. Sheltered by the earth, the sprout grew

brave and happy; nurtured selflessly by the earth, it grew healthy and strong. Happily it grew, singing in the rain, dancing and swaying in the wind. The sprout and the earth depend on one another ...

Years passed, and the sprout grew into a towering tree. It stood strong upon the earth, with stout branches tipped with countless leaves. The tree's roots still dug into the earth as they had before, and they now plunged deep into the soil below. The earth, which had once protected the tiny sprout, was now the foundation for a mighty tree.

A ray of sunlight shone down on the tree. The tree swayed its body and stretched its arms out wide and breathed deeply of the sunlit air. The ground below breathed in time with the tree, and the earth felt renewed. Just then, a fresh breeze blew forth from among the branches, and the tree trembled in delight, rippling with energy. The tree and the sunlight depend on one another ...

People sat in the cool shade of the tree and basked in the brisk, fragrant air. The air cleansed their hearts and lungs, and it cleansed the blood within them, and their bodies were no longer torpid or constrained. People and the tree depend on one another ...

A flock of little chirping birds alighted on the branches of the tree. Perhaps they landed there to evade a predator, or to breed and raise their young, or perhaps they were just resting for a while. Birds and the tree depend on one another ...

The roots of the tree, twisted and tangled, dug deep into the earth. With its trunk, it sheltered the earth from the wind and rain, and it stretched out its limbs to protect the earth beneath its feet. The tree did so because the earth was its mother. They strengthen each other and rely on each other, and they shall never part ...

And so, this story ends. The story I told was about a seed, the earth, a tree, the sunlight, the birds, and man. It had only a few scenes. What feelings did it leave you with? When I speak in this way, do you understand what I am saying? (We understand.) Please, talk about your feelings. What did you feel after hearing this story? I shall first tell you that all the characters in the story can be seen and touched; they are real things, not metaphors. I want you to consider what I said. There was nothing esoteric within My story, and its main points could be expressed in a few sentences from the story. (The story we heard paints a beautiful picture. A seed comes to life and as it grows, it experiences the four seasons of the year: spring, summer, fall, and winter. The earth nurtures the sprouting seed as a mother would. It warms the sprout in winter so that it may survive the cold. After the sprout has grown into a tree, a ray of sunshine touches its branches, bringing it much joy. I see that among the multitude of God's creation, the earth too is alive, and that it and the tree depend on each other. I also see the great warmth that sunlight bestows on the tree, and I see birds, common creatures though they are, coming together with the tree and with human beings in a picture of perfect harmony. These are the feelings I had in my heart as I heard this story; I realize that all these things are indeed alive.) Well said! Does anyone have something else to add? (In this story of a seed sprouting and growing into a towering tree, I see the wonder of God's

creation. I see that God made all things reinforce and depend on one another, and that all things are connected and serve one another. I see God's wisdom, His wonder, and I see that He is the source of life for all things.)

Everything I just spoke of is a thing you have seen before. Seeds, for instance they grow into trees, and though you may not be able to see every detail of the process, you know that it happens, do you not? You know, too, about the earth and the sunlight. The image of birds perched on a tree is something everyone has seen, yes? And the image of people cooling themselves in the shade of a tree—this is something you have all seen, yes? (Yes.) So, when all of these things are in a single image, what feeling does that image produce? (A feeling of harmony.) Does each of the things in such an image come from God? (Yes.) Since they come from God, God knows the value and significance of the earthly existence of all these different things. When God created all things, when He planned and created each thing, He did so with intent; and when He created those things, each was imbued with life. The environment He created for the existence of mankind, as just described in our story, is one where seeds and the earth depend on each other, where the earth can nourish seeds and seeds are bound to the earth. This relationship was ordained by God at the very beginning of His creation. A scene of a tree, sunlight, birds, and humans is a depiction of the living environment God created for mankind. First, the tree cannot leave the earth, nor can it be without sunlight. So, what was God's purpose in creating the tree? Can we say that it is only meant for the earth? Can we say that it is only meant for the birds? Can we say that it is only meant for people? (No.) What is the relationship between them? The relationship between them is one of mutual strengthening, interdependence and inseparability. That is to say, the earth, the tree, the sunlight, the birds and people rely on one another for existence and nurture one another. The tree protects the earth, and the earth nurtures the tree; the sunlight provides for the tree, while the tree gains fresh air from the sunlight and lessens the scorching heat of the sun upon the earth. Who benefits from this in the end? It is mankind, is it not? This is one of the principles that underlies the environment in which mankind lives, which God created; it is how God intended it to be from the first. Even though this image is a simple one, we can see within it God's wisdom and His intention. Mankind cannot live without the earth, or without trees, much less without the birds and the sunlight. Is this not so? Though this is just a story, what it portrays is a microcosm of God's creation of the heavens and earth and all things and His gift of an environment in which mankind may live.

It was for mankind that God created the heavens and earth and all things, as well as an environment to inhabit. First, the main point our story addressed is the mutual strengthening, the interdependence, and the coexistence of all things. Under this principle, the environment of mankind's existence is protected; it can exist and be sustained. Because of this, mankind can thrive and reproduce. The image we saw was one of a tree, the earth, sunlight, birds, and people together. Was God in this image?

One did not see Him there. But one did see the rule of mutual strengthening and interdependence between the things in the scene; in this rule, one can see the existence and sovereignty of God. God uses such a principle and such a rule to preserve the life and existence of all things. In this way, He provides for all things and for mankind. Is this story connected to our main theme? On the surface, it seems not to be, but in reality, the rule with which God created all things and His mastery over all things are intimately related to His being the source of life for all things. These facts are inseparable. Now you are beginning to learn something!

God commands the rules that govern the operation of all things; He commands the rules that govern the survival of all things; He controls all things, and sets them to both reinforce and depend on each other, so that they do not perish or disappear. Only thus can mankind live on; only thus can they live under God's guidance in such an environment. God is the master of these rules of operation, and no one can interfere with them, nor can they change them. Only God Himself knows these rules and only God Himself manages them. When the trees will sprout; when it will rain; how much water and how many nutrients the earth will give to the plants; in what season the leaves will fall; in what season the trees will bear fruit; how many nutrients the sunlight will give to the trees; what the trees will exhale after having been fed by the sunlight—all these things were preordained by God when He created all things, as rules that no one can break. The things that God created, whether living or, in the eyes of man, non-living, sit in His hand, where He controls them and reigns over them. No one can change or break these rules. This is to say, when God created all things, He predetermined that without the earth, the tree could not set down roots, sprout, and grow; that if the earth had no trees, then it would dry out; that the tree should become the home of the birds and a place where they may shelter from the wind. Can a tree live without the earth? Absolutely not. Could it live without the sun or rain? It could not, either. All of these things are for mankind, for mankind's survival. From the tree, man receives fresh air, and man lives upon the earth, which is protected by the tree. Man cannot live without sunlight or various living beings. Though these relationships are complex, you must remember that God created the rules that govern all things so that they may strengthen each other, depend on each other, and exist together. In other words, every single thing He created has value and significance. If God created something without significance, God would have it disappear. This is one of the methods God uses to provide for all things. What do the words "provide for" refer to in this story? Does God water the tree every day? Does the tree need God's help to breathe? (No.) "Provide for" refers here to God's management of all things after their creation; it is enough for God to manage them after establishing the rules that govern them. Once a seed is planted in the earth, the tree grows by itself. The conditions for its growth were all created by God. God made the sunlight, the water, the soil, the air, and the surrounding environment; God made the wind, frost, snow, and rain and the four seasons. These are the conditions that the tree needs in order to grow,

and these are things that God prepared. So, is God the source of this living environment? (Yes.) Does God have to count each leaf on the trees every day? No! Nor does God need to help the tree breathe or to wake up the sunlight every day, saying, "It is time to shine on the trees now." He does not have to do that. The sunlight shines on its own when it is time for it to shine, in accordance with the rules; it appears and shines on the tree and the tree absorbs the sunlight when it needs to, and when it does not, the tree still lives within the rules. You may not be able to explain this phenomenon clearly, but it is nonetheless a fact, which everyone can see and acknowledge. All you need to do is recognize that the rules that govern the existence of all things come from God, and know that God is sovereign over the growth and survival of all things.

Now, does this story contain what people refer to as a "metaphor"? Is it a personification? (No.) I have told a true story. Every sort of living thing, everything that has life, is ruled over by God; each living thing was imbued with life by God when it was created; the life of every living thing comes from God and follows the course and laws that direct it. This does not require man to alter it, nor does it require man's help; it is one of the ways in which God provides for all things. You understand, do you not? Do you think it is necessary for people to recognize this? (Yes.) So, does this story have anything to do with biology? Is it related in some way to a field of knowledge or a branch of learning? We are not discussing biology, and we certainly are not conducting biological research. What is the main idea of our talk? (God is the source of life for all things.) What have you seen within creation? Have you seen trees? Have you seen the earth? (Yes.) You have seen the sunlight, have you not? Have you seen birds perched in the trees? (We have.) Is mankind happy to live in such an environment? (Yes.) That is to say, God uses all things—the things He created—to maintain and protect mankind's home, their life environment. In this way, God provides for mankind and for all things.

How do you like the style of this talk, the way I am fellowshiping? (It is easy to understand, and there are many real-life examples.) These are not empty words I speak, are they? Do people need this story to understand that God is the source of life for all things? (Yes.) In that case, let us move on to our next story. The next story is a bit different in content, and the focus is a bit different as well. Everything that appears in this story is something people can see with their eyes in God's creation. Now, I will begin My next narration. Please listen quietly and see if you can figure out My meaning. After the story, I will ask you some questions to see how much you have learned. The characters in this story are a great mountain, a little stream, a fierce wind, and a gigantic wave.

Story 2: A Great Mountain, a Little Stream, a Fierce Wind, and a Gigantic Wave

There was a little stream that meandered to and fro, finally arriving at the foot of a great mountain. The mountain blocked the tiny stream's path, so the stream said to the mountain in its weak, little voice, "Please let me pass. You are standing in my way and

blocking my path forward." "Where are you going?" the mountain asked. "I am looking for my home," the stream responded. "Alright, go ahead and flow right over me!" But the tiny stream was too weak and too young, so it had no way to flow over such a great mountain. It could only continue to flow there against the foot of the mountain ...

A fierce wind swept by, carrying sand and detritus to where the mountain stood. The wind bellowed at the mountain, "Let me pass!" "Where are you going?" the mountain asked. "I want to go over to the other side of the mountain," howled the wind in response. "Alright, if you can break through my waist, then you can go!" The fierce wind howled this way and that, but no matter how furiously it blew, it could not break through the mountain's waist. The wind grew tired and stopped to rest—and on the other side of the mountain, a breeze began to blow, pleasing the people there. This was the mountain's greeting to the people …

At the seashore, the ocean spray rolled gently against the rocky shore. Suddenly, a gigantic wave arose and roared its way toward the mountain. "Move over!" shouted the gigantic wave. "Where are you going?" the mountain asked. Unable to stop its advance, the wave bellowed, "I am expanding my territory! I want to stretch out my arms!" "Alright, if you can pass over my peak, I will let you through." The great wave retreated some distance, then once again surged toward the mountain. But no matter how hard it tried, it could not get over the mountain's peak. The wave could only roll slowly back out to sea ...

For thousands of years, the little stream trickled gently around the foot of the mountain. Following the mountain's directions, the little stream made its way back home, where it joined a river, which in turn joined the sea. Under the mountain's care, the little stream never lost its way. The stream and the mountain reinforced each other and depended on each other; they strengthened each other, counteracted each other, and existed together.

For thousands of years, the fierce wind howled, as was its habit. It still came often to "visit" the mountain, with great swirls of sand spun into its gusts. It threatened the mountain, but never broke through its waist. The wind and the mountain reinforced each other and depended on each other; they strengthened each other, counteracted each other, and existed together.

For thousands of years, the gigantic wave never stopped to rest, and it marched relentlessly forward, continuously expanding its territory. It roared and surged time and again toward the mountain, yet the mountain never moved an inch. The mountain watched over the sea, and in this way, the creatures in the sea multiplied and thrived. The wave and the mountain reinforced each other and depended on each other; they strengthened each other, counteracted each other, and existed together.

So our story ends. First, tell Me, what was this story about? To begin, there were a great mountain, a little stream, a fierce wind, and a gigantic wave. What happened in the first passage, with the little stream and the great mountain? Why have I chosen to talk

about a stream and a mountain? (Under the mountain's care, the stream never lost its way. They relied on each other.) Would you say the mountain protected or obstructed the little stream? (It protected it.) But did it not obstruct it? It and the stream watched out for each other; the mountain protected the stream and obstructed it, too. The mountain protected the stream as it joined the river, but obstructed it to keep it from flowing where it would, causing floods and bringing disaster to the people. Is this not what the passage was about? By protecting the stream and by blocking it, the mountain safeguarded the homes of the people. The little stream then joined the river at the foot of the mountain and flowed on into the sea. Is this not the rule that governs the stream's existence? What enabled the stream to join the river and the sea? Was it not the mountain? The stream relied on the mountain's protection and its obstruction. So, is this not the main point? Do you see in this the importance of mountains to water? Did God have His purpose in making every mountain, great and small? (Yes.) This short passage, with nothing but a little stream and a great mountain, lets us see the value and significance of God's creation of those two things; it shows us, too, the wisdom and purpose in His rule over them. Is that not so?

What was the story's second passage about? (A fierce wind and the great mountain.) Is wind a good thing? (Yes.) Not necessarily—sometimes the wind is too strong and causes disaster. How would you feel if you were made to stand in the fierce wind? It depends on its strength. If it were a level three or four wind, it would be tolerable. At most, a person might have trouble keeping their eyes open. But if the wind fiercened and became a hurricane, would you be able to withstand it? You would not. So, it is wrong for people to say that the wind is always good, or that it is always bad, because this depends on its strength. Now, what is the mountain's function here? Is its function not to filter the wind? What does the mountain reduce the fierce wind to? (A breeze.) Now, in the environment that humans inhabit, do most people experience gales or breezes? (Breezes.) Was this not one of God's purposes, one of His intentions in creating mountains? How would it be if people lived in an environment where sand flew wildly in the wind, unimpeded and unfiltered? Might it be that a land beset by flying sand and stone would be uninhabitable? The stones might strike people, and the sand might blind them. The wind might sweep people off their feet or carry them into the air. Houses might be destroyed, and all manner of disasters would happen. Yet is there value in the existence of fierce wind? I said it was bad, so one might feel it has no value, but is that so? Does it not have value once it has turned into a breeze? What do people need most when the weather is humid or stifling? They need a light breeze, to blow on them gently, to refresh them and clear their heads, to sharpen their thinking, to repair and improve their state of mind. Now, for example, you all sit in a room with many people and stuffy air—what do you need most? (A light breeze.) Going to a place where the air is turbid and filthy can slow one's thinking, reduce one's circulation, and diminish one's clarity of mind. However, a bit of movement and circulation freshen the air, and people feel

differently in fresh air. Though the little stream could cause disaster, though the fierce wind could cause disaster, as long as the mountain is there, it will turn that danger into a force that benefits people. Is that not so?

What was the story's third passage about? (The great mountain and the gigantic wave.) The great mountain and the gigantic wave. This passage is set at the seashore at the foot of the mountain. We see the mountain, the ocean spray, and a huge wave. What is the mountain to the wave in this instance? (A protector and a barrier.) It is both a protector and a barrier. As a protector, it keeps the sea from disappearing, so that the creatures that live in it may multiply and thrive. As a barrier, the mountain keeps the sea's waters from overflowing and causing disaster, from causing harm and destroying people's homes. So, we can say that the mountain is both a protector and a barrier.

This is the significance of the interconnection between the great mountain and the little stream, the great mountain and the fierce wind, and the great mountain and the gigantic wave; this is the significance of their strengthening and counteracting each other, and of their coexistence. These things, which God created, are governed in their existence by a rule and a law. So, what deeds of God did you see in this story? Has God been ignoring all things since He created them? Did He create rules and design the ways that all things function, only to ignore them after that? Is that what happened? (No.) Then what did happen? God is still in control. He controls the water, the wind, and the waves. He does not let them run rampant, nor does He let them cause harm or destroy the homes people live in. Because of this, people can live on and multiply and thrive on the land. This means that when He created all things, God had already planned their rules for existence. When God made each thing, He ensured it would benefit mankind, and He took control over it, so that it might not trouble mankind or cause him disaster. Were it not for God's management, would the waters not flow without restraint? Would the wind not blow without restraint? Do the water and the wind follow rules? If God did not manage them, no rules would govern them, and the wind would howl and the waters would be unrestrained and cause floods. If the wave had been higher than the mountain, would the sea be able to exist? It would not. If the mountain were not as high as the wave, the sea would not exist, and the mountain would lose its value and significance.

Do you see God's wisdom within these two stories? God created everything that exists, and He is sovereign of everything that exists; He manages all of it and He makes provision for all of it, and within all things, He sees and scrutinizes every word and action of everything that exists. So, too, does God see and scrutinize every corner of human life. Thus, God knows intimately each detail of everything that exists within His creation, from each thing's function, its nature, and its rules for survival to the significance of its life and the value of its existence, all of this is known to God in its entirety. God created all things—do you think He needs to study the rules that govern them? Does God need to study human knowledge or science to learn about and understand them? (No.) Is there one among mankind with the learning and erudition to understand all things as

God does? There is not, right? Are there any astronomers or biologists who truly understand the rules by which all things live and grow? Can they truly understand the value of the existence of each thing? (No, they cannot.) This is because all things were created by God, and no matter how much or how deeply mankind studies this knowledge, or how long they endeavor to learn it, they will never be able to fathom the mystery or the purpose of God's creation of all things. Is that not the case? Now, from our discussion thus far, do you feel that you have gained a partial understanding of the true meaning of the phrase: "God Is the Source of Life for All Things"? (Yes.) I knew that when I discussed this topic—God Is the Source of Life for All Things—many people would immediately think of another phrase: "God is truth, and God uses His word to provide for us," and nothing beyond that level of the topic's meaning. Some might even feel that God's provision of human life, of daily food and drink and every daily necessity does not count as His providing for man. Are there not some who feel this way? Yet, is not God's intent in His creation obvious—to allow mankind to exist and live normally? God maintains the environment in which people live and He provides all of the things needed by mankind for their survival. Furthermore, He manages and holds sovereignty over all things. All of this allows mankind to live and thrive and multiply normally; it is in this way that God provides for all of creation and for mankind. Is it not true that people need to recognize and understand these things? Perhaps some may say, "This topic is too far from our knowledge of the true God Himself, and we do not want to know this because we do not live by bread alone, but instead live by the word of God." Is this understanding correct? (No.) Why is it incorrect? Can you have a complete understanding of God if you only have knowledge of the things God has said? If you only accept God's work and accept God's judgment and chastisement, can you have a complete understanding of God? If you only know a small part of God's disposition, a small part of God's authority, would you consider that enough to achieve an understanding of God? (No.) God's actions began with His creation of all things, and they continue today—God's actions are apparent at all times, from moment to moment. If one believes God exists only because He has chosen a group of people to perform His work upon and to save, and that nothing else has anything to do with God, neither His authority, His status, nor His actions, then can one be considered to have a true knowledge of God? People who have this so-called "knowledge of God" have only a one-sided understanding, according to which they confine His deeds to one group of people. Is this a true knowledge of God? Are people with this kind of knowledge not denying God's creation of all things and His sovereignty over them? Some people do not wish to engage with this point, instead thinking to themselves: "I haven't seen God's sovereignty over all things. The idea is so removed, and I don't care to understand it. God does what He wants, and it has nothing to do with me. I only accept God's leadership and His word so that I can be saved and made perfect by God. Nothing else matters to me. The rules God made when He created all things and what He does to

provide for all things and for mankind have nothing to do with me." What kind of talk is this? Is this not an act of rebellion? Are there any among you with an understanding like this? I know, even without your saying so, that a great many of you here do. By-the-book people like this look at everything from their own "spiritual" point of view. They want only to limit God to the Bible, limit God by the words He has spoken, to the sense derived from the literal written word. They do not wish to know God more and they do not want God to split His attention by doing other things. This type of thinking is childish, and it is also excessively religious. Can people who hold these views know God? It would be very difficult for them to know God. Today I have told two stories, each addressing a different aspect. You might feel, having just come into contact with them, that they are profound or a bit abstract, difficult to comprehend and understand. It might be difficult to connect them with God's actions and God Himself. However, all of God's actions and all He has done within creation and among mankind should be known, clearly and accurately, by every person, by everyone who seeks to know God. This knowledge will give you surety in your belief in the true existence of God. It will also give you accurate knowledge of God's wisdom, His power, and the manner by which He provides for all things. It will allow you to clearly conceive God's true existence and see that His existence is not fictional, not a myth, not vague, not a theory, and certainly not a sort of spiritual consolation, but a real existence. Furthermore, it will allow people to know that God has always provided for all creation and for mankind; God does this in His own way and in accordance with His own rhythm. So, it is because God created all things and gave them rules that they are each able, under His preordination, to perform their allotted tasks, fulfill their responsibilities, and perform their own roles; under His preordination, each thing has its own use in service of mankind and the space and environment mankind inhabits. If God had not done so and mankind had no such environment to inhabit, then believing in God or following Him would be impossible for mankind; it would all amount to nothing more than empty talk. Is that not so?

Let us look again at the story of the great mountain and the little stream. What is the function of the mountain? Living things flourish on the mountain, so its existence has inherent value, and it also obstructs the little stream, preventing it from flowing as it will and bringing disaster to the people. Is that not the case? The mountain exists in its own way of being, allowing the myriad living things upon it to flourish—the trees and grasses and all the other plants and animals on the mountain. It also directs the course of the little stream's flow—the mountain gathers up the waters of the stream and guides them naturally around its foot where they may flow into the river and eventually the sea. These rules did not occur naturally, but were put in place especially by God at the time of creation. As for the great mountain and the fierce wind, the mountain, too, needs the wind. The mountain needs the wind to caress the living things that live upon it, while at the same time restricting the fierce wind's force so that it does not blow wantonly. This rule embodies, in a certain respect, the duty of the great mountain; so, did this rule

regarding the mountain's duty take form on its own? (No.) It was made by God. The great mountain has its duty and the fierce wind has its duty as well. Now, let us turn to the great mountain and the huge wave. Without the mountain's existence, would the water find a direction of flow on its own? (No.) The water would flood. The mountain has its own existential value as a mountain, and the sea has its own existential value as a sea; however, under circumstances in which they are able to exist together normally and do not interfere with one another, they also confine one another—the great mountain confines the sea so that it does not flood, thereby protecting the people's homes, and confining the sea also allows it to nurture the living things that dwell within it. Did this landscape take form on its own? (No.) It too was created by God. We see from this image that when God created all things, He predetermined where the mountain would stand, where the stream would flow, from which direction the fierce wind would begin to blow and where it would go, and how high the huge waves should be. All of these things contain God's intentions and purpose—they are God's deeds. Now, can you see that God's deeds are present in all things? (Yes.)

What is our purpose in discussing these things? Is it to make people study the rules by which God created all things? Is it to encourage interest in astronomy and geography? (No.) Then what is it? It is to make people understand the deeds of God. In God's actions, people can affirm and verify that God is the source of life for all things. If you can understand this, then you will be truly able to confirm God's place in your heart, and you will be able to confirm that God is God Himself, the unique, the Creator of the heavens and earth and all things. So, is it useful to your understanding of God to know the rules of all things and to know God's deeds? (Yes.) How useful is it? First of all, when you have understood the deeds of God, can you still be interested in astronomy and geography? Can you still have the heart of a skeptic and doubt that God is the Creator of all things? Can you still have the heart of a researcher and doubt that God is the Creator of all things? (No.) When you have confirmed that God is the Creator of all things and understood some of the rules of God's creation, will you truly believe in your heart that God provides for all things? (Yes.) Does "provision" here have a particular significance, or does its use refer to a specific circumstance? "God provides for all things" is a phrase with very broad significance and scope. God does not merely provide people with their daily food and drink; He provides mankind with everything they need, including everything that people can see, but also things that cannot be seen. God upholds, manages, and reigns over this living environment, which is essential to mankind. That is to say, whatever environment mankind needs for each season, God has prepared it. God also manages the type of air and the temperature so that they may be suitable for human survival. The rules that govern these things do not occur by themselves or at random; they are the result of God's sovereignty and His deeds. God Himself is the source of all of these rules and the source of life for all things. Regardless of whether or not you believe it, whether or not you can see it, or whether

or not you can understand it, this remains an established and unassailable fact.

I know that the vast majority of people only have faith in the words and work of God that are included in the Bible. For a minority of people, God has revealed His deeds and allowed people to see the value of His existence. He has also let them have some understanding of His status and confirmed the fact of His existence. However, for many more people, the fact that God created all things and that He manages and provides for all things seems vague or unspecific; such people may even maintain an attitude of doubt. This attitude causes them to consistently believe that the laws of the natural world formed spontaneously, that nature's changes, transitions, phenomena, and the very laws that govern it arose out of nature itself. People cannot conceive in their hearts of how God created all things and reigns over them; they cannot understand how God manages and provides for all things. Under the limits of this premise, people cannot believe that God created, reigns over, and provides for all things; even those who believe are limited in their belief to the Age of Law, the Age of Grace and the Age of Kingdom: They believe that God's deeds and His provisions for mankind are exclusively for His chosen people. This is something I am most loath to see, and something that causes so much pain, because even as mankind enjoys all that God brings, they deny all He does and all He gives them. People only believe that the heavens and earth and all things are governed by their own, natural rules and their own, natural laws for survival, and that they are without any ruler to manage them or sovereign to provide for them and keep them. Even if you believe in God, you might not believe that all these are His deeds; indeed, this is one of the things most often neglected by every believer in God, everyone who accepts God's word, and everyone who follows God. So, as soon as I begin discussing something that is unrelated to the Bible or so-called spiritual terminology, some people become bored or weary or even uncomfortable. They feel that My words seem disconnected from spiritual people and spiritual things. That is a terrible thing. When it comes to knowing the deeds of God, though we do not mention astronomy, nor do we research geography or biology, yet we must understand God's sovereignty over all things, we must know of His provision for all things, and that He is the source of all things. This is a necessary lesson and one that must be studied. I believe you have understood My words, yes?

The two stories I just told, though slightly unusual in content and manner of expression, told, as they were, in a somewhat special way, were My attempt to use straightforward language and a simple approach to help you gain and accept something more profound. This was My only goal. In these little stories and the pictures they paint, I wanted you to see and believe that God is sovereign over all creation. The goal of telling these stories is to allow you to see and know the infinite deeds of God within the finite confines of a story. As to when you will fully realize and achieve this result in yourselves—that depends on your own experiences and your own pursuit. If you are someone who pursues the truth and seeks to know God, then these things will

serve as an ever more forceful reminder; they will grant you a deep awareness, a clarity in your understanding, which will gradually draw close to God's actual deeds, with a closeness that will be without distance and without error. However, if you are not someone who seeks to know God, then these stories cannot do you any harm. Just consider them true stories.

Have you gained any understanding from these two stories? Firstly, are these two stories set apart from our previous discussion of God's concern for mankind? Is there an inherent connection? Is it true that within these two stories we see the deeds of God and the thorough consideration He gives to everything He plans for mankind? Is it true that everything God does and everything He thinks are for the sake of mankind's existence? (Yes.) Is God's careful thought and consideration for mankind not very evident? Mankind does not have to do anything. God has prepared for people the air—all they need to do is breathe it. The vegetables and fruits they eat are readily available. From north to south, from east to west, each region has its own natural resources. Different regional crops and fruits and vegetables have all been prepared by God. In the greater environment, God made all things mutually reinforcing, interdependent, mutually strengthening, mutually counteracting, and coexistent. This is His method and His rule to maintain the survival and existence of all things; in this way, mankind has been able to grow safely and serenely within this living environment, to multiply from one generation to the next, even unto the present day. This is to say, God brings balance to the natural environment. If God were not sovereign and in control, then the environment, even had it still been created by God, would be beyond anyone's ability to maintain and keep in balance. In some places there is no air, and mankind cannot survive in such places. God will not allow you to go to them. So, do not go beyond the proper limits. This is for mankind's protection—there are mysteries within. Each aspect of the environment, the length and breadth of the earth, every creature on the earth—both living and dead—were conceived and prepared by God in advance. Why is this thing needed? Why is that thing unnecessary? What is the purpose of having this thing here and why should that thing go there? God already thought through all of these questions, and there is no need for people to think about them. There are some foolish people who think always of moving mountains, but instead of doing that, why not move to the plains? If you do not like mountains, why do you live near them? Is that not foolish? What would happen if you moved that mountain? Hurricanes and huge waves would come and people's homes would be destroyed. Would this not be folly? People are capable only of destruction. They cannot even maintain the only place they have to live, and yet they want to provide for all things. This is impossible.

God allows mankind to manage all things and have lordship over them, but does man do a good job? Man destroys whatever he can. He is not simply unable to keep everything God made for him in its original condition—he has done the opposite and destroyed God's creation. Mankind has moved the mountains, reclaimed land from the

seas, and turned the plains into deserts where no man can live. Yet it is in the desert that man has made industry and built nuclear bases, sowing destruction everywhere. Now rivers are no longer rivers, the sea no longer the sea.... Once mankind has broken the balance of the natural environment and its rules, his day of disaster and death is not far away; it is inevitable. When disaster comes, mankind will know the preciousness of everything God made for him and how important it is to mankind. For man, living in an environment whose winds and rains come in their time is like living in paradise. People do not realize that this is a blessing, but the moment they lose it all, they will see how rare and precious it is. And once it is gone, how would one get it back? What could people do if God were unwilling to create it again? Is there anything you could do? Actually, there is something you can do. It is very simple—when I tell you what it is, you will know immediately that it is feasible. How is it that man has found himself in his current state of existence? Is it because of his greed and destruction? If man ends this destruction, will his living environment not gradually right itself? If God does nothing, if God no longer wishes to do anything for mankind—that is to say, if He does not intervene in this matter—then mankind's best solution would be to halt all the destruction and allow their living environment to return to its natural state. Putting an end to all this destruction means putting an end to the plunder and devastation of the things God has created. Doing so would allow the environment in which man lives to recover gradually, while failure to do so would result in an ever more odious environment for life whose destruction would quicken with time. Is My solution simple? It is simple and feasible, is it not? Simple indeed, and feasible for some people—but is it feasible for the vast majority of people on earth? (It is not.) For you, at the very least, is it feasible? (Yes.) What is it that causes you to say "yes"? Could it be said that it comes from a foundation of understanding God's deeds? Could it be said that its condition is obedience to God's sovereignty and plan? (Yes.) There is a way to change things, but that is not the topic we are discussing now. God is responsible for every single human life and He is responsible to the very end. God provides for you, and even if, in this environment destroyed by Satan, you have been sickened or polluted or violated, it does not matter— God will provide for you, and God will let you live on. You should have faith in this. God will not lightly allow a human being to die.

Have you now come to feel something of the importance of recognizing that "God is the source of life for all things"? (Yes, we have.) What feelings do you have? Tell Me. (In the past, we never thought to connect the mountains, seas, and lakes with the actions of God. It was not until hearing God's fellowship today that we understood these things have God's deeds and wisdom within them; we see that even when God began creating all things, He had already imbued each thing with a destiny and His good will. All things are mutually reinforcing and interdependent and mankind is the ultimate beneficiary. What we heard today feels very fresh and novel—we have felt how real God's actions are. In the real world, in our daily lives, and in our encounters with all things, we see that

this is so.) You have truly seen, have you not? God does not provide for mankind without a sound foundation; His provision is not just a few short words. God has done so much, and even the things you do not see are all for your benefit. Man lives in this environment, within all things that God created for him, where people and all things depend on each other. For example, plants exhale gases that purify the air, and people breathe the purified air and benefit from it; yet some plants are poisonous to people, while other plants counteract the poisonous plants. This is a wonder of God's creation! But let us leave this topic for now; today, our discussion was mainly of the coexistence of man and the rest of creation, without which man cannot live. What is the importance of God's creation of all things? Man cannot live without the rest, just as man needs air to live—if you were placed in a vacuum, you would soon die. This is a very simple principle that shows man cannot exist separately from the rest of creation. So, what attitude should man have toward all things? One that treasures them, protects them, makes efficient use of them, does not destroy them, does not waste them, and does not change them on a whim, for all things are from God, all things are His provision to mankind, and mankind must treat them conscientiously. Today we have discussed these two topics. Ponder them carefully and contemplate them well. Next time, we will discuss some things in more detail. This concludes today's gathering. Goodbye!

January 18, 2014

God Himself, the Unique VIII God Is the Source of Life for All Things (II)

We will continue to fellowship on our last topic. Can you recall what the topic was the last time we held fellowship? (God Is the Source of Life for All Things.) Is this topic, "God Is the Source of Life for All Things," a topic that feels very distant to you? Or do you already have a rough concept of it in your hearts? Can someone talk for a moment about what the focal point of our last fellowship on this topic was? (Through God's creation of all things, I see that He nurtures all things and nurtures mankind. In the past, I always thought that when God makes provision for man, He provides His word only to His chosen people; I never saw that, through the laws that govern all things, God is nurturing all of mankind. It is only through God's communication of this truth that I have become aware He is the source of all things, that the lives of all things are provided by Him, that God arranges these laws and nurtures all things. From God's creation of all things, I see His love.) Last time, we primarily held fellowship about God's creation of all things and how He established laws and principles for them. Under such laws and such principles, all things live and die and coexist with man under God's dominion and within God's sight. We first talked about God creating all things and using His own methods to determine the laws by which they grow, as well as the trajectories and patterns of their growth. He also determined the ways that all things survive in this land so they may continue to grow and multiply and survive in interdependence. With such methods and laws, all things are able to exist and grow on this land effortlessly and peacefully, and only with such an environment may mankind have a stable home and a stable situation in which to live, always moving forward under God's guidance—ever forward.

Last time, we discussed a basic concept of God providing for all things: God provides for all things in this way so that all things may exist and live for mankind's benefit. In other words, such an environment exists because of the laws set by God. It is only due to God's maintenance and administration of such laws that mankind has its current living environment. It is a great leap between what we talked about last time and the knowledge of God we spoke of in the past. What is the reason for the existence of that leap? It is that when we talked about knowing God in the past, we were talking within the scope of God saving and managing mankind—that is, the salvation and management of God's chosen people—and within that scope, we spoke of knowing God, God's deeds, His disposition, what He has and is, His will, and how He provides man with the truth and with life. But last time, the topic we began is not limited to the contents of the Bible and to the scope of God saving His chosen people. Rather, the topic extends beyond this scope, out of the confines of the Bible and of the three stages of work God performs on His chosen people, discussing instead God Himself. So, when you hear this part of My fellowship, you must not confine your knowledge of God to the Bible and the three stages of God's work. Instead, you must keep your perspective open; you must see God's deeds

and what He has and is within all things, and how He dictates and manages all things. Through this method and on this foundation, you can see how God provides for all things, which enables mankind to understand that God is the true source of life for all things, that this is, in fact, the true identity of God Himself. That is to say, God's identity, status and authority, His everything, are not meant only for those who currently follow Him not just meant for you, this group of people—but are meant for all things. So, the scope of all things is very broad. I use the term "all things" to describe the scope of God's rule over everything because I want to tell you that the things dictated by God are not merely the things you can see with your eyes—they include not only the material world that all can see, but also another world beyond the material world that cannot be seen by human eyes, and beyond even that, the planets and outer space, where mankind cannot dwell. That is the scope of God's dominion over all things. The scope of His dominion is very broad; for your part, each of you needs to and must understand, see, and have clarity about what you should understand, what you should see, and of what things you should have knowledge. Although the scope of the term "all things" is indeed very broad, I will not tell you about the things within that scope that you have no way of seeing or with which you cannot personally come into contact. I will only tell you about the things within that scope with which human beings can come into contact, understand, and comprehend, so that everyone can become aware of the true meaning of the phrase "God is the source of life for all things." In this way, none of the words of My fellowship to you will be hollow.

Last time, we used the method of storytelling to provide a simple overview of the topic "God Is the Source of Life for All Things," so that people could gain a basic understanding of how God provides for all things. What is the purpose of teaching this basic concept to you? It is to make people understand that God's work reaches beyond just the Bible and His three stages of work. He is doing much more work that humans cannot see and with which they cannot come into contact, work to which He attends personally. If God were working solely on His management and on leading His chosen people forward, and not engaged in any of this other work, then it would be very difficult for this humanity, including all of you, to continue moving forward. This humanity and this world would be unable to continue developing. Therein lies the importance of the phrase "God is the source of life for all things," which is the subject of the fellowship I will hold with you today.

The Basic Environment for Life That God Creates for Mankind

We have discussed many topics and much content relating to the words "God is the source of life for all things," but do you know in your hearts what things God bestows on mankind, apart from providing you with His word and performing on you His work of chastisement and judgment? Some people might say, "God bestows on me grace and blessings; He gives me discipline and comfort, and He gives me care and protection in

every possible way." Others will say, "God bestows on me daily food and drink," while some will even say, "God has bestowed everything on me." You might respond to those issues people encounter in their daily lives in a way that relates to the scope of your own, fleshly life experience. God bestows many things on each person, though what we are discussing here is not limited only to the scope of people's daily needs, but is meant to expand each person's field of view and let you see things from a macro perspective. Since God is the source of life for all things, how does He maintain the life of all things? In other words, what does God give to all things of His creation to maintain their existence and the laws underpinning it, so that they may continue to exist? That is the main point of our discussion today. Do you understand what I have said? This topic might be very unfamiliar to you, but I will not talk about any doctrines that are too profound. I will strive to make sure you can listen to My words and gain understanding from them. You need not feel any burden—all you have to do is listen carefully. However, at this point, I must emphasize once more: What is the topic I am speaking about? Tell Me. (God Is the Source of Life for All Things.) How then does God provide for all things? What does He provide to all things so it can be said that "God is the source of life for all things"? Do you have any concepts or thoughts about this? It seems I am discussing a topic that is almost completely unknown to you, in your hearts and in your minds. But I hope you can connect this topic and what I will say to God's deeds, rather than to any knowledge, human culture, or research. I am talking only about God, about God Himself. This is My suggestion to you. I am sure you understand, right?

God has bestowed many things on mankind. I will begin by talking about what people can see, that is, what they can feel. These are things people can accept and understand in their hearts. So first, let us begin by talking about what God has provided to mankind with a discussion of the material world.

a. Air

First, God created air so that man may breathe. Air is a substance with which humans can make daily contact and it is a thing on which humans rely from moment to moment, even as they sleep. The air that God created is monumentally important for humankind: It is essential to their every breath and to life itself. This substance, which can only be felt but not seen, was God's first gift to all the things of His creation. But after creating air, did God stop, considering His work finished? Or did He consider how dense air would be? Did He consider what air would contain? What was God thinking when He made air? Why did God make air, and what was His reasoning? Humans need air—they need to breathe. Firstly, the density of air should be fit for human lungs. Does anyone know the density of air? In truth, there is no particular need for people to know the answer to this question in terms of numbers or data, and indeed, it is quite unnecessary to know the answer—it is perfectly adequate to have only a general idea. God made air with a density that would be most suitable for human lungs to breathe. That is, He made air so

that it may readily enter human bodies through their breath, and so that it will not do harm to the body as it breathes. These were God's considerations when He made air. Next, we will talk about what air contains. Its contents are not poisonous to humans and will not damage the lungs or any part of the body. God had to consider all of this. God had to consider that the air humans breathe should enter and exit the body smoothly, and that, after being inhaled, the nature and quantity of the substances within air should be such that the blood, as well as the waste air in the lungs and the body as a whole, would be properly metabolized. Moreover, He had to consider that the air should not contain any poisonous substances. My aim in telling you about these two standards for air is not to feed you any particular knowledge, but to show you that God created every single thing within His creation in accordance with His own considerations, and everything He created is the best it could be. Furthermore, as for the amount of dust in the air; and the amount of dust, sand and dirt upon the earth; as well as the amount of dust that drifts down to the earth from the sky—God has His ways for managing these things, too, ways of clearing them away or causing them to disintegrate. While there is a certain quantity of dust, God made it so that dust would not harm man's body or endanger man's breathing, and He made the dust particles of a size that would not be harmful to the body. Was God's creation of the air not a mystery? Was it a simple thing, like blowing a breath of air from His mouth? (No.) Even in His creation of the simplest things, God's mystery, the workings of His mind, His way of thinking, and His wisdom are all apparent. Is God not practical? (Yes, He is.) What this means is that even in creating simple things, God was thinking of humanity. Firstly, the air humans breathe is clean, and its contents are suitable for humans to breathe, not poisonous and causing no harm to humans; in the same way, the density of air is suited for human breathing. This air, which humans constantly inhale and exhale, is essential to the human body, the human flesh. This is why humans may breathe freely, without constraint or worry. They can thus breathe normally. Air is that which God created in the beginning, and that which is indispensable for human breathing.

b. Temperature

The second thing we will discuss is temperature. Everybody knows what temperature is. Temperature is something that is essential to an environment suitable for human survival. If the temperature is too high—for example, supposing the temperature were higher than forty degrees Celsius—would this not be very draining for humans? Would it not be exhausting for humans to live in such conditions? And what if the temperature were too low? Supposing the temperature were to reach negative forty degrees Celsius—humans could not withstand these conditions, either. Therefore, God was very particular in setting the range of temperatures, that being the temperature range to which the human body can adapt, which falls, more or less, between negative thirty degrees Celsius and forty degrees Celsius. Temperatures in lands from north to south essentially

fall within this range. In frigid regions, temperatures can drop to perhaps negative fifty or sixty degrees Celsius. God would not have men live in such regions. So, why do these freezing regions exist? God has His own wisdom, and He has His own intentions for this. He would not have you go near those places. Places that are too hot and too cold are protected by God, meaning He did not plan for man to live there. These places are not for mankind. But why would God have such places exist on earth? If these are places where God would not have man dwell or even survive, then why would God create them? Therein lies God's wisdom. That is, God has reasonably calibrated the temperature range of the environment in which humans survive. There is also a natural law at work here. God created certain things to maintain and control the temperature. What are they? First, the sun can bring people warmth, but are people able to endure this warmth when it is too great? Is there anyone who dares approach the sun? Is there any scientific instrument on earth that can approach the sun? (No.) Why not? The sun is too hot. Anything that comes too close will melt. Therefore, God worked specifically to set the sun's height above mankind and its distance from him in accordance with His meticulous calculations and with His standards. Then, there are the earth's two poles, south and north. These regions are entirely frozen and glacial. Can mankind live in glacial regions? Are such places suited to human survival? No, so people do not go to these places. Since people do not go to the South and North Poles, their glaciers are preserved and are able to serve their purpose, which is to control temperature. You understand, yes? If there were no South Pole and no North Pole, then the sun's constant heat would cause the people on the earth to perish. But does God keep the temperature within a range suited to human survival through these two things alone? No. There are also all sorts of living things, such as the grass in the fields, the various types of trees, and all kinds of plants in the forests that absorb the sun's heat and, in doing so, neutralize the sun's thermal energy in a way that regulates the temperature of the environment in which mankind lives. There are also sources of water, such as rivers and lakes. No one can decide the area that rivers and lakes cover. No one can control how much water there is on earth, nor where that water flows, the direction of its flow, its volume, or its speed. Only God knows. These various sources of water, from groundwater to the visible rivers and lakes above ground, can also regulate the temperature of the environment in which man lives. Aside from water sources, there are also all kinds of geographical formations, such as mountains, plains, canyons, and wetlands, that all regulate temperatures to an extent proportionate to their geographical scope and area. For instance, if a mountain has a circumference of one hundred kilometers, then those hundred kilometers will contribute a hundred kilometers' worth of usefulness. As for just how many such mountain ranges and canyons God has created on earth, this is a number God has considered. In other words, behind the existence of every single thing created by God, there is a story, and each thing contains God's wisdom and plans. Consider, for example, forests and all the various kinds of vegetation—the range and extent of the area in which

they exist and grow is beyond the control of any human, and no one has a say over these things. Likewise, no human can control how much water they absorb, nor how much thermal energy they absorb from the sun. All of these things fall within the scope of the plan God made when He created all things.

It is only due to God's careful planning, consideration, and arrangement in all regards that man can live in an environment with such a suitable temperature. Therefore, every single thing man sees with his eyes, such as the sun, the South and North Poles that people so often hear about, as well as the various living things on and below the ground and in the water, and the amount of space covered by forests and other sorts of vegetation, and water sources, various bodies of water, quantities of seawater and freshwater, and different geographical environments—these are all things God uses to maintain normal temperatures for man's survival. This is absolute. It is only because God has thought deeply about all of this that man is able to live in an environment with such suitable temperatures. It must be neither too cold nor too hot: Places that are too hot, where temperatures exceed what the human body can adapt to are certainly not put aside for you by God. Places that are too cold, where temperatures are too low, where, after arriving there, humans would thoroughly freeze in just a few minutes, such that they cannot speak, their brains freeze, they are unable to think, and soon they suffer asphyxiation—such places are also not set aside by God for mankind. No matter what kind of research humans want to carry out, nor whether they want to innovate or break through such limitations—whatever thoughts people have, they will never be able to exceed the limits of what the human body can adapt to. They will never be able to cast off these limitations God created for man. This is because God created human beings, and God knows best what temperatures the human body can adapt to. But humans themselves do not know. Why do I say humans do not know? What foolish things have humans done? Have many people not constantly attempted to challenge the North and South Poles? Such people have always wanted to go to those places to occupy the land, so they can put down roots there. It would be an act of absurdity. Even if you have thoroughly researched the poles, then what? Even if you can adapt to the temperatures and are able to live there, would it benefit mankind in any way if you were to "improve" the current environment for life of the South and North Poles? Mankind has an environment in which it can survive, yet men do not remain there quietly and amenably, but instead insist on venturing to places where they cannot survive. What is the meaning of this? They have grown bored and impatient with life in this suitable temperature, and have enjoyed too many blessings. Besides, this regular environment for life has been almost completely destroyed by mankind, so now they think they might as well go to the South Pole and the North Pole to do more damage or pursue some sort of "cause," that they can find some way of "blazing a new trail." Is this not foolish? That is to say, under the leadership of their forebear Satan, this mankind continues to do one absurd thing after another, recklessly and wantonly destroying the beautiful home God created for them. This is the doing of Satan. Further, seeing that mankind's survival on earth is somewhat imperiled, many people seek ways to visit the moon, wanting to establish a way to survive there. But ultimately, the moon lacks oxygen. Can human beings survive without oxygen? Since the moon lacks oxygen, it is not a place where man can stay, yet man persists in his desire to go there. What should this behavior be called? It is also self-destruction. The moon is a place without air, and its temperature is not suitable for human survival—therefore, it is not a place put aside by God for man.

Our topic just now, temperature, is something people encounter in their daily lives. Temperature is something all human bodies can sense, but no one thinks about how temperature came about, or who is in charge of it and controls it such that it is suitable for human survival. This is what we are learning now. Is God's wisdom within this? Is God's action within this? (Yes.) Considering that God created an environment with a temperature suitable for human survival, is this one of the ways in which God provides for all things? It is.

c. Sound

What is the third thing? It is also something that is an essential part of the normal environment of human existence, something for which God had to make arrangements when He created all things. It is very important to God and to each and every human being. If God had not taken care of this thing, it would have greatly interfered with the survival of mankind, meaning it would have had such a significant impact on the life of man and his fleshly body that mankind would not have been able to survive in such an environment. It could be said that no living thing could have survived in such an environment. So, what is this thing I speak of? I am speaking about sound. God created everything, and everything lives within God's hands. All of the things of God's creation are living and turning in constant motion within His sight. What I mean by this is that each thing God created has value and meaning in its existence; that is, there is something essential about the existence of each and every thing. In God's eyes, each thing is alive, and, since all things are alive, each of them produces sound. For instance, the earth is constantly turning, the sun is constantly turning, and the moon, too, is constantly turning. As all things propagate, develop, and move, they are constantly emitting sound. All of the things of God's creation that exist on earth are in constant propagation, development, and motion. For example, the bases of mountains are moving and shifting, and all the living things in the depths of the seas are swimming and moving about. This means that these living things, all things in the sight of God, are in constant, regular motion, in accordance with established patterns. So, what is it that is brought into being by all of these things that propagate and develop in darkness and move in secrecy? Sounds—great, powerful sounds. Beyond planet Earth, all kinds of planets are also in constant motion, and living things and organisms on these planets are also constantly propagating, developing, and moving. That is, all things with life and without life are constantly moving forward in the sight of God, and, as they do, each of them is also emitting sound. God has also made arrangements for these sounds, and I believe you already know His reason for this, do you not? When you get close to an airplane, what effect does the roar of its engine have on you? If you stay near it too long, your ears will be deafened. What about your heart—will it be able to withstand such an ordeal? Some people with weak hearts would not. Of course, even those with strong hearts will not be able to withstand it for too long. That is to say, the effect of sound on the human body, whether it be the ears or the heart, is extremely significant for every human being, and sounds that are too loud will harm people. Therefore, when God created all things and after they had begun to function normally, God made appropriate arrangements for these sounds, the sounds of all things in motion. This, too, is one of the issues God had to consider when creating an environment for mankind.

First, the height of the atmosphere above the earth's surface has an effect on sound. In addition, the size of gaps in the soil will also manipulate and affect sound. Then there are various geographical environments whose confluence also affects sound. That is to say, God uses certain methods to eliminate some sounds, so that humans may survive in an environment that their ears and hearts can withstand. Otherwise, sounds would present a massive obstacle to mankind's survival, becoming a great nuisance in their lives and posing a serious problem for them. This means that God was very particular in His creation of land, the atmosphere, and the various kinds of geographical environment, and contained within each of these is God's wisdom. Mankind's understanding of this need not be too detailed—it is enough for people to know that God's actions are contained therein. Now you tell Me, this work that God did—precisely calibrating sound in order to maintain mankind's living environment and their normal lives—was it necessary? (Yes.) Since this work was necessary, then from this perspective, can it be said that God used this work as a way to provide for all things? God created such a guiet environment for the provision of mankind so that the human body could live quite normally within it, without suffering any interference, and so that mankind would be able to exist and live normally. Is this, then, not one of the ways in which God provides for mankind? Was this not a very important thing God did? (Yes.) There was great need of it. So how do you appreciate this? Though you cannot feel that this was God's action, nor do you know how God performed this action at the time, can you still sense the necessity of God having done this thing? Can you feel God's wisdom and the care and thought He put into it? (Yes, we can.) If you are able to feel this, then that is enough. There are many actions God has performed among the things of His creation that people can neither feel nor see. I raise this simply to inform you about God's actions, so that you may come to know God. These are clues that can better enable you to know and understand God.

d. Light

The fourth thing concerns people's eyes: light. This too is very important. When you see a bright light, and its brightness reaches a certain strength, it is capable of blinding human eyes. After all, human eyes are eyes of the flesh. They cannot bear irritation. Does anyone dare to stare directly into the sun? Some people have tried it, and if they are wearing sunglasses, it works just fine—but that requires the use of a tool. Without tools, man's naked eyes have no ability to face the sun and stare directly at it. However, God created the sun to bring light to mankind, and this light, too, is something He took care of. God did not simply finish creating the sun, put it somewhere, and then ignore it; that is not how God does things. He is very careful in His actions, and thoroughly thinks them through. God created eyes for mankind so that they may see, and He also set in advance the parameters of light with which man sees things. It would be no good if the light were too dim. When it is so dark that people cannot see their fingers in front of them, then their eyes have lost their function and serve no use. But light that is too bright renders human eyes equally unable to see things, because the brightness is intolerable. Therefore, God has furnished the environment of mankind's existence with an appropriate amount of light for human eyes—an amount that will not hurt or damage people's eyes, let alone cause them to lose their function. This is why God added layers of clouds around the sun and the earth, and why the density of the air is able to properly filter out types of light that can hurt people's eyes or skin—these are commensurate. In addition, the colors of the earth that God created reflect sunlight and all other kinds of light, and are able to eliminate the sorts of light that are too bright for human eyes to adapt to. Thus, people are able to walk outside and lead their lives without needing constantly to wear very dark sunglasses. Under normal circumstances, human eyes can see things within their field of vision without being bothered by the light. That is to say, it would be no good if the light were too piercing, nor if it were too dim. If it were too dim, people's eyes would be damaged, and, after brief use, ruined; if it were too bright, people's eyes would be unable to withstand it. This very light that people have must be suitable for human eyes to see, and God has, through various methods, minimized the damage caused to human eyes by light; and though this light may benefit or afflict human eyes, it suffices to let people reach the end of their lives while maintaining use of their eyes. Was God not thorough in considering this? Yet the devil, Satan, acts without such considerations ever passing through its mind. With Satan, the light is always either too bright or too dim. This is how Satan acts.

God did these things to all aspects of the human body—to its vision, hearing, taste, breathing, feelings, and so on—in order to maximize mankind's survival adaptability, so they can live normally and continue to do so. In other words, the current environment for life, created by God, is the environment most suitable and beneficial for the survival of mankind. Some people may think that this does not matter a great deal, that it is all a

very ordinary thing. Sound, light, and air are things that people feel are their birthright, which they have enjoyed from the moment they were born. But behind these things that you are able to enjoy, God has been at work; this is something humans need to understand, something they need to know. No matter if you feel there is no need to understand these things or to know them, in short, when God created them, He gave much thought to them, He had a plan, He had certain ideas. He did not frivolously or simply put mankind into such an environment for life, without giving the matter a second thought. You may think I have spoken too grandly about each of these small things, but in My view, each thing that God provided for mankind is necessary for the survival of humanity. There is God's action in this.

e. Airflow

What is the fifth thing? This thing is closely related to each day of every person's life. So close is its relation to human life that the human body could not live in this material world without it. This thing is airflow. Perhaps anyone could understand the noun "airflow" having just heard it. So, what is airflow? You could say that "airflow" is simply the flowing movement of air. Airflow is a wind that the human eye cannot see. It is also one way in which gases move. Yet, in this talk, to what does "airflow" primarily refer? As soon as I say it, you will understand. The earth carries the mountains, the seas, and all the things of creation as it turns, and when it turns, it turns with speed. Though you do not feel any of this spinning, the rotation of the earth exists nonetheless. What does its rotation engender? When you run, does wind not arise and rush past your ears? If wind can be generated when you run, how can there not be wind when the earth rotates? When the earth rotates, all things are in motion. The earth itself is in motion and rotating at a certain speed, while all things on it are also constantly propagating and developing. Therefore, movement at a certain speed will naturally give rise to airflow. This is what I mean by "airflow." Does this airflow not affect the human body to a certain extent? Consider typhoons: Normal typhoons are not particularly powerful, but when they strike, people cannot even stand steadily, and it is difficult for them to walk in the wind. Even a single step is arduous, and some people may even be pushed against something by the wind, unable to move. This is one of the ways airflow can affect mankind. If the entire earth were covered in plains, then, when the earth and all things rotated, the human body would be entirely unable to withstand the airflow thereby generated. It would be extremely difficult to respond to such a situation. If this were really the case, such airflow would not only bring harm to mankind, but total destruction. Humans would be unable to survive in such an environment. This is why God made different geographical environments to resolve such airflows—in different environments, airflows grow weaker, change their direction, change their speed, and change their force. That is why people can see different geographical features, such as mountains, great mountain ranges, plains, hills, basins, valleys, plateaus, and great rivers. With these different geographical features, God changes an airflow's speed, direction, and force. This is the method He uses to reduce or manipulate airflow into wind whose speed, direction, and force are appropriate, so that humans may have a normal environment in which to live. Is there need of this? (Yes.) Doing something like this seems difficult for humans, but it is easy for God, because He observes all things. For Him, it could not be simpler or easier to create an environment with a suitable airflow for mankind. Therefore, in such an environment created by God, each thing within all of His creation is indispensable. There is value and necessity in the existence of each and every thing. However, this principle is not understood by Satan or by mankind who has been corrupted. They continue destroying and developing and exploiting, with vain dreams of turning mountains into flat land, filling in canyons, and building skyscrapers on flat land to create concrete jungles. It is God's hope that mankind can live happily, grow happily, and spend each day happily in this most suitable environment, which He has prepared for them. That is why God has never been careless in how He treats the environment in which mankind lives. From temperature to air, from sound to light, God has made intricate plans and arrangements, so that the bodies of men and their living environment would not be subject to any interference from natural conditions, and that instead, mankind would be able to live and multiply normally, and live normally with all things in harmonious coexistence. All of this is provided by God to all things and to mankind.

In the way God arranged these five basic conditions for human survival, can you see how He provides for mankind? (Yes.) That is to say, God is the Creator of all the most basic conditions for human survival, and God is also managing and controlling these things; even now, after thousands of years of human existence, God is still continuously making alterations to their living environment, providing them the best and most suitable environment so that their lives can be maintained in a regular way. For how long can such a situation be maintained? In other words, how long will God continue providing such an environment? It will last until God fully completes His management work. Then, God will change mankind's living environment. It might be that He will make these changes with the same methods, or it might be with different methods. But what people must now know is that God is continuously providing for mankind's needs; managing the environment in which mankind lives; and preserving, protecting and maintaining that environment. With such an environment, God's chosen people are able to live in a regular manner and accept God's salvation and chastisement and judgment. All things continue to survive because of God's sovereignty, and all mankind continues moving forward because of such provisions from God.

Has this last part of our fellowship brought you any new thoughts? Have you now become aware of the greatest difference between God and mankind? Ultimately, who is the master of all things? Is it man? (No.) Then what is the difference between how God and humans treat all creation? (God rules over and arranges all things, while man enjoys them.) Do you agree with this? The greatest difference between God and mankind is

that God rules over and provides for all creation. He is the source of everything, and while God provides for all creation, mankind enjoys it. That is to say, man enjoys all the things of creation when he accepts the life that God bestows on all things. God is the Master, and mankind enjoys the fruits of God's creation of all things. What, then, from the perspective of all the things of God's creation, is the difference between God and mankind? God can see clearly the laws of how all things grow, and He controls and dominates these laws. That is, all things are within God's sight and within the scope of His scrutiny. Can mankind see all things? What mankind can see is limited to what is directly in front of them. If you climb a mountain, then what you see is just that mountain. You cannot see what is on the other side of the mountain. If you go to the shore, then what you see is just one side of the ocean, and you cannot know what the other side of the ocean is like. If you go into a forest, you can see the vegetation in front of you and around you, but you cannot see what lies farther ahead. Humans cannot see places that are higher, farther, deeper. All that they can see is what is directly in front of them, within their field of vision. Even if humans know the law that dictates the four seasons of the year, or the laws of how all things grow, they are still unable to manage or dictate all things. Yet the way God sees all of creation is just as He would see a machine that He built Himself. He is deeply familiar with every component and every connection, what their principles are, what their patterns are, and what their purposes are—God knows all of this with the highest degree of clarity. Hence God is God, and man is man! Though man may go deep in his research of science and the laws that govern all things, that research is limited in scope, whereas God controls everything, which, to man, is an infinite control. A man could spend his entire life researching God's smallest deed without achieving any true results. This is why, if you use just knowledge and what you have learned to study God, you will never be able to know God or understand Him. But if you choose the way of seeking the truth and seeking God, and look at God from the perspective of coming to know Him, then, one day, you will recognize that God's actions and wisdom are everywhere at once, and you will know why God is called the Master of all things and the source of life for all things. The more you gain such understanding, the more you will understand why God is called the Master of all things. All things and everything, including you, are constantly receiving the steady flow of God's provision. You will also be able to clearly sense that in this world, and among this mankind, there is no one apart from God who could have the ability and the essence with which He rules over, manages, and maintains the existence of all things. When you arrive at this understanding, you will truly recognize that God is your God. When you reach this point, you will have truly accepted God and allowed Him to be your God and your Master. When you have obtained such an understanding and your life has reached such a point, God will no longer test you and judge you, nor will He make any demands of you, because you will understand God, will know His heart, and will have truly accepted God in your heart. This is an important reason to fellowship on these topics of God's

domination and management of all things. Doing so is meant to give people more knowledge and understanding—not merely to have you acknowledge, but to have you know and understand God's actions in a more practical way.

The Daily Food and Drink God Prepares for Mankind

Just now, we spoke about a part of the environment at large, specifically, the conditions necessary for human survival, which God prepared when He created the world. We spoke about five things, five elements of the environment. Our next topic is intimately related to every human's physical life, and it is more pertinent to that life and a greater fulfillment of its requisite conditions than the previous five. Namely, it is the food people eat. God created man and placed him in a suitable environment for life; afterward, man needed food and water. Man had this need, so God made corresponding preparations for him. Therefore, each step of God's work and each thing He does are not hollow words being spoken, but real, practical action being taken. Is food not indispensable in people's daily lives? Is food more important than air? They are equally important. Both are necessary conditions and substances for mankind's survival and for safeguarding the continuation of human life. Which is more important air, or water? Temperature, or food? They are all equally important. People cannot choose between them because they cannot be without any of them. This is a real, practical issue, not one of your choosing between things. You do not know, but God knows. When you see food, you think, "I cannot be without food!" But right after you were created, did you know that you needed food? You did not know, but God did. It was only when you became hungry and saw fruit on the trees and grain on the ground for you to eat that you realized you need food. It was only when you became thirsty and caught sight of spring water—only when you drank did you realize you need water. Water was prepared in advance for mankind by God. Food, no matter if one eats three meals a day or two, or even more, is, in brief, something indispensable to humans in their daily lives. It is one of the things needed to maintain the normal, continuing survival of the human body. So, where does most food come from? First, it comes from the soil. Soil was prepared in advance for mankind by God, and it is suitable for the survival of many kinds of plants, not just trees or grass. God prepared for mankind the seeds of all kinds of grains and the seeds of various other foods, and He gave mankind suitable soil and land to sow, and with these things, mankind obtains food. What are the various kinds of food? You probably already know. First, there are the various grains. What different kinds of grain are there? Wheat, foxtail millet, glutinous millet, proso millet, and other types of husked grain. Cereals, too, come in all sorts, with different varieties from south to north: barley, wheat, oats, buckwheat, and so on. Different species are suited to cultivation in different regions. There are also various kinds of rice. The south has its own varieties, which are longer of grain and suited to people from the south because the climate is hotter there, meaning local people have

to eat varieties such as indica rice, which is not too sticky. Their rice cannot be too sticky or else they would lose their appetites and be unable to stomach it. Northerners eat stickier rice, as the north is always cold, so the people there must eat more adherent things. Next, there are also many varieties of bean, which grow above the ground, and root vegetables that grow underground, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, taro, and many others. Potatoes grow in the north, where their quality is very high. When people have no grain to eat, potatoes, as a staple food, can keep them eating three meals a day. Potatoes can also be used as a food reserve. The quality of sweet potatoes is somewhat worse than that of potatoes, but they can still be used as a staple food to round out three daily meals. When grains are hard to come by, people can stave off hunger with sweet potatoes. Taro, which is often eaten by people in the south, can be used in the same way, and it can also serve as a staple food. Such are the many diverse crops, which are necessary parts of people's daily food and drink. People use various grains to make bread, steamed buns, noodles, rice, rice noodles, and other things. God has bestowed these various grains on mankind in abundance. Why there are so many varieties is a matter of God's will: They are suited for growing in the different soils and climates of the north, south, east, and west; while their various compositions and contents correspond to the various compositions and contents of the human body. Only by eating these grains can people maintain the various nutrients and substances their bodies require. Northern food and southern food are different, but they have many more similarities than differences. Both of them can satisfy the regular needs of the human body and support its normal survival. So, there is an abundance of species produced in each region because humans' physical bodies need what these different foods supply—they need to be supplied by these various foods grown from the soil to sustain the body's normal existence, that they may lead a normal human life. In short, God has been very considerate to mankind. The various foods God bestowed on people are not unvaried—on the contrary, they are quite eclectic. If people want to eat cereals, they can eat cereals. Some people prefer rice to wheat, and, not liking wheat, they can eat rice. There are all kinds of rice—long-grain, short-grain—and each can satisfy people's appetites. Therefore, if people eat these grains—as long as they are not too particular with their food—they will not lack for nutrition and are guaranteed to live healthily until they die. That was the idea God had in mind when He bestowed food on mankind. The human body cannot be without these things—is that not the reality? These are practical problems that man could not solve on his own, but God was prepared for them: He thought of them beforehand and made preparations for mankind.

But that is not all God gave to mankind—He also gave mankind vegetables! With rice, if that is all you eat, nothing else, you might not get enough nutrients. On the other hand, if you fry up a few vegetables or mix a salad to eat with your meals, then the vitamins in the vegetables and their various trace elements and other nutrients will be

able to satisfy the needs of your body naturally. And people can also eat a bit of fruit between meals. Sometimes, people need more fluids or other nutrients or different flavors, and fruits and vegetables are there to meet these needs. As the north, south, east, and west have different soils and climates, they produce different varieties of vegetables and fruits. Since the climate in the south is excessively hot, most fruits and vegetables there are of the cooling type, which, once eaten, are able to balance cold and heat in the human body. By contrast, there are fewer varieties of vegetables and fruits in the north, yet enough for the local people to enjoy. However, due to developments in society in recent years and so-called social progress, as well as improvements in communication and transportation linking the north, south, east, and west, people in the north are also able to eat some southern fruits and vegetables, or regional products from the south, and they can do so in all four seasons of the year. Although this is able to satisfy people's appetites and material desires, their bodies are unwittingly subjected to varying degrees of harm. This is because, among the foods God prepared for mankind, there are foods and fruits and vegetables meant for people in the south, as well as foods and fruits and vegetables meant for people in the north. That is to say, if you were born in the south, it is appropriate for you to eat things from the south. God specifically prepared these foods and fruits and vegetables because the south has a particular climate. The north has food that is necessary for the bodies of people in the north. Yet because people have gluttonous appetites, they have unknowingly allowed themselves to be swept up in the tide of new societal trends, and they unconsciously violate these laws. Though people feel their lives are better than in the past, this kind of societal progress causes insidious harm to the bodies of an increasing number of people. This is not what God wants to see, and it is not what He intended when He provided mankind with these foods, fruits and vegetables. Humans themselves have caused the current situation by violating the laws of God.

Even apart from all that, the bounty that God has bestowed on mankind is truly rich in abundance, and each place has its local product. For instance, some places are rich in red dates (also known as jujubes), others are rich in walnuts, and others are rich in peanuts or various other nuts. These material things all provide the nutrients needed by the human body. But God supplies mankind with things in the right quantity and at the right time, according to the season and time of year. Mankind covets physical enjoyment and is gluttonous, making it easy to violate and damage the natural laws of human growth that He established when He created mankind. Let us take the cherry as an example. They become ripe around June. Under normal circumstances, by August, there are no cherries left. They can only be kept fresh for two months, but, using scientific techniques, people are now able to extend that period to twelve months, even through the next year's cherry season. This means that there are cherries all year round. Is this phenomenon normal? (No.) Then when is the best season to eat cherries? That would be the period from June to August. Past this time, no matter how fresh you keep them,

they do not taste the same, nor do they provide what the human body needs. Once the expiration date has passed, no matter what chemicals you use, you will not be able to imbue them with everything they have when grown naturally. Additionally, the harm that chemicals do to humans is something that no one can resolve or change, no matter what they try. So, what does the current market economy bring to people? People's lives seem better, transportation between regions has become highly convenient, and people can eat all kinds of fruits in any of the four seasons. People in the north are able to eat bananas regularly, as well as any regional delicacies, fruit, or other food from the south. But this is not the life that God wants to give to mankind. This kind of market economy may bring some benefit to people's lives, but it can also bring harm. Because of the abundance in the market, many people eat without thinking about what they are putting into their mouths. This behavior is in violation of the laws of nature, and it is harmful to people's health. So, the market economy cannot bring people true happiness. See for yourselves. Are grapes not sold at the market in all four seasons? In fact, grapes only stay fresh for a very short period of time after they are picked. If you keep them until June of the next year, can they still be called grapes? Or would "garbage" be a better name for them? They are not simply lacking the substance of a fresh grape—they have more chemical products in them. After a year, they are no longer fresh, and what nutrients they had are long gone. When people eat grapes, they have this feeling: "How lucky we are! Would we have been able to eat grapes in this season thirty years ago? You couldn't have, even if you'd wanted to! Life is so good now!" Is this really happiness? If you are interested, you can do your own research into chemically preserved grapes and see just what they are made of and whether these substances can be of benefit to humans. In the Age of Law, when the Israelites had left Egypt and were traveling, God gave them quail and manna. But did God allow people to preserve these foods? Some of them were short-sighted and, afraid that there would be no more the next day, so they put some aside for later. Then what happened? The next day, it was rotten. God does not let you put some aside, for He has made preparations that guarantee you will not go hungry. But mankind does not have such confidence, nor do they have true faith in God. They always want to give themselves room to maneuver, and are never able to see all the care and thought behind God's preparations for mankind. They cannot feel it, so they cannot fully put their faith in God, always thinking: "God's actions are unreliable! Who knows if God will give us what we need or when He will give it to us! If I'm famished and God doesn't provide, then won't I starve? Won't I lack nutrition?" See how flimsy man's confidence is!

Grains, fruits and vegetables, and all types of nuts—these are all vegetarian foods. They contain nutrients sufficient to satisfy the needs of the human body, even though they are vegetarian foods. However, God did not say: "I will give just these foods to mankind. Let them eat only these things!" God did not stop there, but went on to prepare for mankind many more foods that are even more delicious. What are these

foods? They are the various kinds of meat and fish that most of you are able to see and eat. He prepared for man many, many kinds of both meat and fish. Fish live in the water, and the flesh of the fish of the water is different in substance from the flesh of land-dwelling animals, and it can provide man with different nutrients. Fish also have properties that can regulate cold and heat in the human body, which is of great benefit to man. But delicious food must not be eaten to excess. As I have already said, God bestows on mankind the right quantity at the right time, so that people can properly enjoy His bestowal in a normal way and in accordance with the season and time. Now, what kinds of foods are included in the category of poultry? Chicken, quail, pigeon, and so on and so forth. Many people also eat duck and goose. Though God has provided all these kinds of meat, He made certain requirements of His chosen people and put specific limits on their diet during the Age of Law. These days, these limits are based on individual taste and personal interpretation. These various meats provide the human body with diverse nutrients, replenishing protein and iron, enriching the blood, fortifying muscles and bones, and building bodily strength. Regardless of how people cook and eat them, these meats can help people improve the flavor of their food and bolster their appetite, while also satisfying their stomachs. Most importantly, these foods can supply the human body with its daily nutritional needs. This was God's consideration when He made food ready for mankind. There are vegetables, there is meat—is this not an abundance? But people should understand what God's intention was when He prepared all foods for mankind. Was it to have mankind overindulge in these foods? What happens when man becomes trapped in attempting to satisfy these material desires? Does he not become over-nourished? Does too much nourishment not afflict the human body in many ways? (Yes.) That is why God apportions the right quantity at the right time and has people enjoy different foods in accordance with different time periods and seasons. For example, after a very hot summer, people accumulate much heat in their bodies, as well as pathogenic dryness and dampness. When autumn arrives, many kinds of fruit ripen, and when people eat these fruits, the dampness in their bodies is expelled. At this time, cattle and sheep have also grown strong, so this is when people should eat more meat for nourishment. By eating various kinds of meat, people's bodies gain energy and warmth to help them withstand the cold of the winter, and they are able to pass the winter safely and healthily as a result. With utmost care and precision, God controls and coordinates what to provide mankind, and when; and when He will have different things grow, bear fruit, and ripen. This relates to "How God prepares the food man needs in his daily life." In addition to many kinds of food, God also provides mankind with sources of water. After eating, people still need to drink water. Would fruit alone suffice? People could not live on fruit alone, and besides, there is no fruit in some seasons. So, how can mankind's water problem be solved? God has solved it by preparing many water sources above and below the ground, including lakes, rivers, and springs. These water sources are potable as long as there is no

contamination, and as long as people have not manipulated or damaged them. In other words, in terms of food sources that sustain the lives of mankind's physical bodies, God has made very precise, very accurate, and very appropriate preparations, so that people's lives are rich and plentiful and not lacking in anything. This is something that people can feel and see.

Additionally, God created among all things some plants, animals, and various herbs that are specifically meant to heal injuries or treat illness in the human body. What should someone do, for instance, if they are burned, or accidentally scald themselves? Can you just rinse the burn with water? Can you just wrap it up with any old piece of cloth? If you do that, the wound might fill with pus or become infected. If someone gets a fever, for instance, or catches a cold; suffers an injury while working; develops a stomach ailment from eating the wrong thing; or develops certain diseases caused by lifestyle factors or emotional issues, including vascular diseases, psychological conditions, or diseases of the internal organs, then there are corresponding plants that cure their conditions. There are plants that improve blood circulation and remove stagnation, relieve pain, stanch bleeding, provide anesthesia, help heal the skin and return it to a normal condition, and disperse stagnant blood and eliminate toxins from the body—in short, these plants have uses in daily life. People can use them, and they have been prepared by God for the human body in case of need. God allowed man to discover some of them by happenstance, while others were discovered by people whom God chose to do so, or as a result of special phenomena He orchestrated. Following the discovery of these plants, mankind would pass them down, and many people would come to know about them. God's creation of these plants thus has value and meaning. In summary, these things are all from God, prepared and planted by Him when He created mankind's living environment. They are essential. Are God's thought processes more thorough than those of mankind? When you see all that God has done, do you have a sense of God's practical side? God works in secret. God created all of this when man had not yet come into this world, when He had had no contact with mankind. Everything was done with mankind in mind, for the sake of man's existence and with thought for their survival, so that mankind may live happily in this rich and plentiful material world that God prepared for them, free from worry about food or clothes, lacking nothing. In such an environment, mankind can continue to reproduce and survive.

Among all God's deeds, great and small, is there any without value or meaning? Everything He does has value and meaning. Let us start our discussion with a common topic. People often ask: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? (The chicken.) The chicken came first, no doubt about it! Why did the chicken come first? Why could the egg not have come first? Does the chicken not hatch from the egg? After twenty-one days, the chicken hatches, and that chicken then lays more eggs, and more chickens hatch from those eggs. So did the chicken or the egg come first? You answer "chicken" with absolute certainty. But why is this your answer? (The Bible says God created the

birds and the beasts.) So, your answer is based on the Bible. But I want you to talk about your own understanding, so that I can see if you have any practical knowledge of God's actions. Now, are you sure about your answer, or not? (God created the chicken, then gave it the ability to reproduce, which means the ability to incubate eggs.) This interpretation is more or less correct. The chicken came first, and then the egg. This is certain. It is not a particularly profound mystery, but the people of the world nonetheless consider it so and try to resolve it with philosophical theories, without ever coming to a conclusion. This is just like when people do not know that God created them. They do not know this fundamental principle, nor do they have a clear idea of whether the egg or the chicken should have come first. They do not know which should have come first, so they are never able to find the answer. It is guite natural that the chicken came first. If there were an egg before the chicken, that would be abnormal! It is such a simple thing the chicken definitely came first. This is not a question that requires advanced knowledge. God created everything, with the intention that man should enjoy it. Once the chicken exists, the egg follows as a matter of course. Is this not a ready solution? If the egg were created first, would it not still need the chicken to incubate it? Creating the chicken directly is a much readier solution. This way, the chicken could lay eggs and incubate the chicks inside, and people could have chicken to eat. How convenient! The way God does things is neat and clean, not at all convoluted. Where does the egg come from? It comes from the chicken. There is no egg without the chicken. What God created was a living thing! Mankind is absurd and ridiculous, always becoming entangled in such simple things, and ending up with a bunch of absurd fallacies. How childish man is! The relationship between the egg and the chicken is clear: The chicken came first. This is the most accurate explanation, the most accurate way to understand it, and the most accurate answer. It is correct.

What topics have we just discussed? We began by talking about the environment mankind inhabits and what God did for that environment and the preparations He made. We discussed what He arranged; the relationships between the things of creation, which God prepared for mankind; and how God arranged these relationships to prevent the things of His creation from harming mankind. God also mitigated the harm that many different factors within His creation may have had on mankind's environment, allowing all things to serve their highest purpose, and bring mankind a beneficial environment with beneficial elements, thus enabling mankind to adapt to such an environment and steadily continue the cycle of life and reproduction. Next, we talked about the food the human body needs—mankind's daily food and drink. This is also a necessary condition for mankind's survival. That is to say, the human body cannot live by breathing alone, with just sunlight for sustenance, or wind, or suitable temperatures. Human beings also need to fill their stomachs, and God prepared for mankind, without overlooking anything, the sources of the things with which they might do so, those being the sources of mankind's food. When you have seen such rich and bountiful produce—the sources of

mankind's food and drink—can you say that God is the source of the supply for mankind and for all the things of His creation? If, during the time of creation, God had only created trees and grass or any number of other living things, and if these various living things and plants were all for cows and sheep to eat, or were for zebras, deer, and various other kinds of animals, for instance, lions were to eat things such as zebras and deer, and tigers were to eat things such as sheep and pigs—but there were not a single thing suitable for humans to eat, would that have worked? It would not. Mankind would not have been able to survive for long. What if humans only ate leaves? Would that have worked? Could humans eat the grass meant for sheep? It might not hurt if they tried a bit, but if they ate such things for a long time, their stomachs would not be able to tolerate it, and people would not have lived for long. There are even things that animals can eat but are poisonous to humans—animals eat them without consequence, but it is not so for humans. This is to say that God created human beings, so God knows best the principles and structure of the human body and what humans need. God knows with perfect clarity the body's composition and content, its needs and the functioning of its internal organs, and how they absorb, eliminate and metabolize various substances. Humans do not; sometimes, they eat imprudently, or engage in reckless self-care, too much of which causes an imbalance. If you eat and enjoy the things that God prepared for you in a normal way, then you will have no health problems. Even if you sometimes experience bad moods and you have stagnation of the blood, this poses no problem at all. You simply need to eat a certain type of plant, and the stagnation will clear up. God has made preparations for all of these things. So, in God's eyes, mankind is far above any other living thing. God prepared an environment for each kind of plant, and He prepared food and an environment for each kind of animal, but mankind has the most stringent needs of its environment, and those needs cannot be overlooked in the slightest way; if they were, mankind would not be able to continue developing and living and reproducing in a normal way. It is God who knows this best, in His heart. When God did this, He placed more importance on it than on anything else. Perhaps you are unable to sense the importance of some unremarkable thing you can see and enjoy in your life, or something you see and enjoy that you have had since birth, but God has already made preparations for you long ago or in secret. To the greatest possible extent, God has removed and mitigated all negative elements that are unfavorable to mankind and might harm the human body. What does this show? Does it show the attitude God had toward mankind when He created them this time? What was that attitude? God's attitude was careful and earnest, and it brooked no interference by any enemy forces or external factors or conditions not of Him. In this can be seen God's attitude in creating and managing mankind this time. And what is God's attitude? Through the environment for survival and life that mankind enjoys, as well as in their daily food and drink and daily needs, we can see God's attitude of responsibility toward mankind, which He has held since He created man, as well as His determination to save mankind at this time. Is

God's authenticity visible in these things? Is His wondrousness? His unfathomability? His omnipotence? God uses His wise and almighty ways to provide for all of mankind, as well as to provision all the things of His creation. Now that I have said so much to you, can you say that God is the source of life for all things? (Yes.) That is certainly so. Do you have any doubts? (No.) God's provision for all things suffices to show that He is the source of life for all things, because He is the source of the provision that has enabled all things to exist, live, reproduce, and continue on, and there is no source except for God Himself. God provides for all the needs of all things and all the needs of mankind, whether those be people's most basic environmental needs, the needs of their daily lives, or the need for the truth that He provides to people's spirits. In every way, God's identity and His status are of great importance to mankind; only God Himself is the source of life for all things. That is to say, God is the Ruler, the Master, and Provider of this world, this world that people can see and feel. For mankind, is this not God's identity? There is nothing false in this. So when you see birds flying in the sky, you should know that God created everything that can fly. There are living things that swim in the water, and they have their own ways of surviving. The trees and the plants that live in the soil bud and sprout in spring and bear fruit and shed leaves in autumn, and by winter all the leaves have fallen as those plants prepare to weather the winter. That is their way of survival. God created all things, and each lives in different forms and different ways and uses different methods to exhibit its life force and the form in which it lives. No matter how things go about living, they are all under God's rule. What is the purpose of God ruling over all the different forms of life and living beings? Is it for the sake of mankind's survival? He controls all the laws of life, all for the sake of mankind's survival. This shows just how important mankind's survival is to God.

Mankind's ability to survive and reproduce normally is of the utmost importance to God. Therefore, God is constantly providing for mankind and all the things of His creation. He provides for all things in different ways, and by maintaining the survival of all things. He enables mankind to continue moving forward, maintaining humanity's normal survival. These are the two aspects of our fellowship today. What are these two aspects? (From the macro perspective, God created the environment in which man lives. That is the first aspect. God also prepared the material things that mankind needs and can see and touch.) We have fellowshiped our main topic through these two aspects. What is our main topic? (God Is the Source of Life for All Things.) Now you should have some understanding of why My fellowship on this topic had such contents. Has there been any discussion unrelated to the main topic? None at all! Perhaps, after hearing these things, some of you have gained some understanding and now feel that these words have weight, that they are very important, but others might have only some literal understanding and feel that these words are unimportant in and of themselves. Regardless of how you understand this in the current moment, when your experience has come to a certain day, when your understanding reaches a certain point, that is, when your knowledge of God's actions and God Himself reaches a certain level, then you will use your own words, which are practical, to deliver a profound and genuine testimony to God's actions.

I think your current understanding is still quite superficial and literal, but, having heard these two aspects of My fellowship, can you at least recognize what methods God uses to provide for mankind or what things God provides to mankind? Do you have a basic concept, a basic understanding? (Yes.) But are these two aspects I fellowshiped related to the Bible? Are they related to God's judgment and chastisement in the Age of Kingdom? (No.) Then why did I fellowship on them? Is it because people must understand them to know God? (Yes.) It is very necessary to know these things and it is also very necessary to understand them. As you seek to understand God in His entirety, do not limit yourself to the Bible, and do not limit yourself to God's judgment and chastisement of man. What is My purpose in saying this? It is to let people know that God is not just the God of His chosen people. You currently follow God, and He is your God, but is He the God of those who do not follow Him? Is God the God of all those people who do not follow Him? Is God the God of all things? (Yes.) Then are God's work and actions limited in scope merely to those who follow Him? (No.) What is the scope of His work and actions? At the smallest level, the scope of His work and actions encompasses all of mankind and all the things of creation. At the highest level it encompasses the entire universe, which people cannot see. So, we may say that God does His work and performs His actions among all mankind, and this suffices to allow people to come to know God Himself in His entirety. If you want to know God, to know Him truly, to understand Him truly, then do not restrict yourself merely to the three stages of God's work, or to stories of the work He performed in the past. If you try to know Him in that way, then you are placing limitations on God, confining Him. You are seeing God as something very small. How would doing so affect people? You would never be able to know God's wondrousness and supremacy, nor His power and omnipotence and the scope of His authority. Such an understanding would have an impact on your ability to accept the truth that God is the Ruler of all things, as well as your knowledge of God's true identity and status. In other words, if your understanding of God is limited in scope, then what you can receive is also limited. This is why you must broaden your scope and expand your horizons. You should seek to understand all of it—the scope of God's work, His management, His rule, and all the things He manages and over which He rules. It is through these things that you should come to understand God's actions. With such an understanding, you will come to feel, without realizing it, that God rules, manages, and provides for all things among them, and you will also truly feel that you are a part and a member of all things. As God provides for all things, you are also accepting God's rule and provision. This is a fact that no one can deny. All things are subject to their own laws under God's rule, and under God's rule, all things have their own rules for survival. Mankind's fate and needs are also bound together with God's

rule and provision. That is why, under God's dominion and rule, mankind and all things are interconnected, interdependent, and interwoven. This is the purpose and value of God's creation of all things.

February 2, 2014

God Himself, the Unique IX God Is the Source of Life for All Things (III)

Over this period of time, we have spoken about many things related to knowing God and recently we talked about a topic which is related to this, and which is of great importance. What is the topic? (God Is the Source of Life for All Things.) It seems the points and the theme I spoke of made a clear impression on everyone. Last time we talked about a few aspects of the environment for survival that God created for mankind, as well as the many kinds of sustenance necessary for people to live, which God has prepared for mankind. In fact, what God does is not limited to preparing an environment for people's survival, nor to preparing their daily sustenance. Rather, it consists of completing a great deal of mysterious and necessary work involving many different facets and aspects for people's survival and for the life of mankind. These are all God's deeds. These deeds of God are not only limited to His preparation of an environment for people's survival and their daily sustenance—they have a much broader scope than that. Aside from these two types of work, He also prepares many environments and conditions for survival that are necessary for man to live. This is the topic that we are going to discuss today. It is also related to God's deeds; otherwise, talking about it here would be meaningless. If people want to know God but they only have a literal understanding of "God" as a word, or of various aspects of what God has and is, then that is not a true understanding. So what is the path to knowledge of God? It is coming to know Him through His deeds, and coming to know Him in all of His many aspects. So, we must hold further fellowship on the subject of God's deeds at the time when He created all things.

Ever since God created all things, they have been functioning and continuing to progress in an orderly way and in accordance with the laws that He prescribed. Under His gaze, under His rule, mankind has survived, and all the while all things have been developing in an orderly way. There is nothing that can change or destroy these laws. It is because of God's rule that all beings can multiply, and it is because of His rule and management that all beings can survive. This is to say that under God's rule all beings come into existence, thrive, disappear, and reincarnate in an orderly fashion. When spring arrives, drizzling rain brings the feeling of the fresh season and wets the earth. The ground begins to thaw, and grass pushes its way up through the soil and begins to sprout, while the trees gradually turn green. All these living things bring fresh vitality to the earth. This is what it looks like when all beings are coming into existence and thriving. All sorts of animals come out of their burrows to feel the warmth of spring and start a new year. All beings bask in the heat during the summer and enjoy the warmth brought by the season. They grow rapidly. Trees, grass, and all types of plants are growing with great speed, until they finally bloom and bear fruit. All beings are busy during the summer, including humans. In the fall, rains bring autumn's coolness, and all types of living beings start to sense the arrival of the harvest season. All beings bear fruit, and humans begin to harvest these various kinds of fruits in order to have food in preparation for winter. In the winter, all beings gradually begin to settle down in quietness and rest as the cold weather sets in, and people also take a break during this season. From season to season, transitioning from spring to summer to fall to winter—these changes all occur according to the laws established by God. He leads all things and mankind using these laws and has devised for mankind a rich and colorful way of life, preparing an environment for survival that has varying temperatures and seasons. Hence, within this kind of orderly environment for survival, humans can survive and multiply in an orderly way. Humans cannot change these laws and no person or being can break them. Though countless changes have occurred—seas have become fields, while fields have become seas—these laws continue to exist. They exist because God exists, and because of His rule and His management. With this type of orderly, large-scale environment, people's lives proceed within these laws and rules. Under these laws were raised generation after generation of people, and generation after generation of people have survived under them. People have enjoyed this orderly environment for survival as well as all of the many things created by God for generation after generation. Even though people feel that these types of laws are innate and contemptuously take them for granted, and even though they cannot feel that God is orchestrating these laws, that God is ruling over these laws, no matter what, God is always engaged in this unchanging work. His purpose in this unchanging work is the survival of mankind, and so that mankind may live on.

God Sets Boundaries for All Things so as to Nurture All of Mankind

Today I am going to speak on the topic of how it is that these types of laws that God has brought to all things nurture all of mankind. This is a rather large topic, so we can divide it into several parts and discuss them one at a time so that they can be clearly delineated for you. This way it will be easier for you to grasp and you can gradually understand it.

The First Part: God Sets Boundaries for Each Sort of Terrain

So, let us begin with the first part. When God created all things, He drew boundaries for mountains, plains, deserts, hills, rivers, and lakes. On the earth there are mountains, plains, deserts and hills, as well as various bodies of water. These constitute different types of terrain, do they not? Between them, God drew boundaries. When we speak of drawing boundaries, it means that mountains have their delineations, plains have their own delineations, deserts have certain limits, and hills have a fixed area. There is also a fixed quantity of bodies of water such as rivers and lakes. That is, when God created all things, He divided everything very clearly. God has already determined how many kilometers the radius of any given mountain should be and what its scope is. He has

also determined how many kilometers the radius of any given plain should be and what its scope is. When creating all things, He also determined the limits of the deserts as well as the range of the hills and their proportions, and what they are bordered by—all of this was determined by Him. He determined the range of rivers and lakes during the act of creating them—they all have their boundaries. So what does it mean when we talk about "boundaries"? We just talked about how God rules over all things by establishing laws for all things. That is, the range and boundaries of mountains will not expand or decrease because of the rotation of the earth or the passing of time. They are fixed, unchanging, and it is God who dictates their unchangeability. As for the areas of the plains, what their range is, what they are bounded by—this has been set by God. They have their boundaries, and as such it would be impossible for a mound of earth to rise up at random from the ground of a plain. The plain cannot suddenly turn into a mountain—this would be impossible. This is the meaning of the laws and boundaries we just talked about. As for the deserts, we will not mention the specific functions of the deserts or any other type of terrain or geographical location here, only their boundaries. Under God's rule, the limits of the desert will not expand either. This is because God has given it its law, its limits. How large its area is and what its function is, what it is bounded by, and where it is located—this has already been set by God. It will not exceed its limits or shift its position, and its area will not expand arbitrarily. Although the flows of waters such as rivers and lakes are all orderly and continuous, they will never move outside of their range or beyond their boundaries. They all flow in one direction, the direction in which they are supposed to flow, in an orderly way. So under the laws of God's rule, no river or lake will dry up arbitrarily or arbitrarily change the direction or quantity of its flow due to the rotation of the earth or the passing of time. All this is within God's control. That is to say, all things created by God in the midst of this mankind have their set places, areas, and limits. That is, when God created all things, their boundaries were established, and they cannot be arbitrarily altered, renewed, or changed. What does "arbitrarily" mean? It means that they will not randomly shift, expand, or change their original form due to the weather, temperature, or the rotational speed of the earth. For example, a mountain is of a certain height, its base is of a certain area, it has a certain altitude, and it has a certain amount of vegetation. This is all planned and calculated by God and it will not be arbitrarily changed. As for plains, the majority of humans reside in the plains, and no shifts in the climate will impact their areas or the value of their existence. Not even the things contained within these various terrains and geographical environments that were created by God will be arbitrarily changed. For example, the composition of the desert, types of underground mineral deposits, the amount of sand a desert contains and its color, the thickness of the desert—these will not arbitrarily change. Why is it that they will not arbitrarily change? It is because of God's rule and His management. Within all of these different terrains and geographical environments created by God, He is managing everything in a planned and orderly way. So all of these

geographical environments still exist and are still performing their functions thousands and even tens of thousands of years after they were created by God. Although there are certain periods when volcanoes erupt, and periods when earthquakes occur, and there are major shifts of the land, God absolutely will not allow any type of terrain to lose its original function. It is only because of this management by God, His rule and control over these laws, that all of this—all of this which is seen and enjoyed by mankind—can survive on the earth in an orderly way. So why does God manage all these various terrains that exist on the earth in this way? His purpose is so that the living things that survive in various geographical environments will all have a stable environment, and so that they are able to continue to live and multiply within that stable environment. All of these things—ones that are mobile and those that are immobile, those that breathe through their nostrils and those that do not—make up a unique environment for the survival of mankind. Only this kind of environment is able to nurture generation after generation of humans, and only this kind of environment can allow humans to continue to peacefully survive, generation after generation.

What I have just talked about is rather a large topic, so perhaps it seems somewhat removed from your lives, but I trust you can all understand it. That is to say, God's laws in His dominion over all things are very important—very important indeed! What is the precondition for the growth of all beings under these laws? It is because of God's rule. It is because of His rule that all things carry out their own functions within His rule. For example, the mountains nurture the forests and the forests in turn nurture and protect the various birds and beasts that live within them. The plains are a platform prepared for humans to plant crops as well as for various birds and beasts. They allow the majority of mankind to live on flat land and provide convenience in people's lives. And the plains also include the grasslands—huge swaths of grassland. The grasslands provide plant cover for the earth's floor. They protect the soil and nurture the cattle, sheep and horses that live on the grasslands. The desert also carries out its own function. It is not a place for humans to live; its role is to make humid climates drier. The flows of the rivers and lakes bring people drinking water in a convenient way. Wherever they flow, people will have water to drink and the needs of all things for water will be conveniently satisfied. These are the boundaries drawn by God for the various terrains.

The Second Part: God Sets Boundaries for Each Form of Life

Because of these boundaries that God has drawn, various terrains have produced different environments for survival, and these environments for survival have been convenient for various kinds of birds and beasts and have also given them space to survive. From this the boundaries for the environments for survival of the various living beings have been developed. This is the second part we are going to talk about next. First of all, where do the birds and the beasts and the insects live? Do they live in forests and groves? These are their home. So, aside from establishing boundaries for the

various geographical environments, God also drew boundaries and established laws for the various birds and beasts, fish, insects, and all the plants. Because of the differences between various geographical environments and because of the existence of different geographical environments, different types of birds and beasts, fish, insects, and plants have different environments for survival. The birds and the beasts and the insects live amongst the various plants, the fish live in the water, and the plants grow on the land. The land includes various zones such as mountains, plains, and hills. Once the birds and the beasts have their own set home, they will not wander around, going any which way. Their homes are the forests and the mountains. If, one day, their homes were destroyed, this order would be thrown into chaos. As soon as the order is thrown into chaos, what are the consequences? Who are the first to be hurt? It is mankind. Within these laws and limits that God has established, have you seen any peculiar phenomena? For example, elephants walking in the desert. Have you seen anything like that? If this really happened it would be a very strange phenomenon, because elephants live in the forest, and that is the environment for survival that God prepared for them. They have their own environment for survival and their own set home, so why would they go running around? Has anyone seen lions or tigers walking by the ocean shore? No, you have not. The home of the lions and tigers is the forest and the mountains. Has anyone seen the whales or sharks of the ocean swimming through the desert? No, you have not. Whales and sharks make their homes in the ocean. In humans' living environment, are there people who live alongside brown bears? Are there people who are always surrounded by peacocks or other birds, inside and outside of their homes? Has anyone seen eagles or wild geese playing with monkeys? (No.) These would all be peculiar phenomena. The reason I speak of these things that seem so peculiar to your ears is to have you understand that all things created by God—no matter if they are fixed in one place or whether they can breathe through their nostrils—have their own laws for survival. Long before God created these living beings. He had already prepared for them their own homes and their own environments for survival. These living beings had their own fixed environments for survival, their own food and their own fixed homes, and they had their own fixed places suitable for their survival, places with temperatures suitable for their survival. Thus, they would not wander around any which way or undermine mankind's survival or impact people's lives. This is how God manages all things, providing for mankind the best environment for survival. The living beings within all things each have their own life-sustaining food within their own environments for survival. With that food, they are attached to their native environment for survival. In that kind of environment, they continue to survive, multiply, and move forward in accordance with the laws God has established for them. Because of these types of laws, because of God's predestination, all things live in harmony with mankind, and mankind coexists together in interdependence with all things.

The Third Part: God Sustains the Environment and Ecology to Nurture Mankind

God created all things and established boundaries for them; among them He nurtured all kinds of living things. Meanwhile, He also prepared different means of survival for mankind, so you can see that human beings do not just have one way to survive, nor do they have just one type of environment for survival. We talked before about God preparing various types of food and water sources for humans, which is critical for allowing mankind's life in the flesh to continue. However, among this mankind, not all people subsist on grains. People have different means of survival due to differences in geographical environments and terrains. These means of survival have all been prepared by God. So not all humans are primarily engaged in farming. That is, not all people get their food from growing crops. This is the third part that we are going to talk about: Boundaries have arisen due to mankind's various different lifestyles. So what other types of lifestyles do humans have? In terms of different food sources, what other kinds of people are there? There are several primary types.

The first is a hunting lifestyle. Everyone knows what that is. What do people who live by hunting eat? (Game.) They eat the birds and the beasts of the forest. "Game" is a modern word. Hunters do not think of it as game; they think of it as food, as their daily sustenance. For example, they get a deer. When they get this deer, it is just like a farmer obtaining food from the soil. A farmer gets food from the soil, and when he sees this food, he is happy and feels at ease. The family will not be hungry with crops to eat. The farmer's heart is free from anxiety and he feels satisfied. A hunter also feels at ease and satisfied when looking at what he has caught because he does not have to worry about food anymore. There is something to eat for the next meal and there is no need to go hungry. This is someone who hunts for a living. The majority of those who subsist on hunting live in the mountain forests. They do not farm. It is not easy to find arable land there, so they survive on various living things, various types of prey. This is the first kind of lifestyle that is different from ordinary people.

The second type is a herder's way of life. Do people who herd animals for a living also farm the land? (No.) So what do they do? How do they live? (For the most part, they herd cattle and sheep for a living, and in the winter they slaughter and eat their livestock. Their staple food is beef and mutton, and they drink milk tea. Although herders are busy all four seasons, they eat well. They have plenty of milk, dairy products, and meat.) People who herd animals for a living primarily eat beef and mutton, drink sheep's milk and cows' milk, and ride cattle and horses to herd their animals in the field with the wind in their hair and the sun on their faces. They do not face the stresses of modern life. They gaze all day at broad expanses of blue skies and grassy plains. The great majority of people who subsist on herding live on grasslands, and they have been able to continue their nomadic way of life for

generations. Although life on the grasslands is a little lonely, it is also a very happy life. It is not a bad way of life!

The third type is the fishing way of life. A small portion of humanity lives by the ocean or on small islands. They are surrounded by water, facing the ocean. These people fish for a living. What is the source of food for those who fish for a living? Their food sources include all types of fish, seafood, and other products of the sea. People who fish for a living do not farm the land, but instead spend every day fishing. Their staple food consists of various types of fish and products of the sea. They occasionally trade these things for rice, flour, and daily necessities. This is a different lifestyle led by people who live near the water. Living close to water, they rely on it for their food, and make their living from fishing. Fishing gives them not only a source of food, but also a means to a livelihood.

Aside from farming the land, humanity lives for the most part according to the three ways of life mentioned above. However, the great majority of people farm for a living, with only a few groups of people who live by herding animals, fishing, and hunting. And what do people who live by farming need? What they need is land. Generation after generation, they live by planting crops in the ground, and whether they plant vegetables, fruits, or grains, it is from the earth that they obtain their food and their daily necessities.

What are the basic conditions underpinning these different human lifestyles? Is it not absolutely necessary that the environments in which they are able to survive be preserved on a basic level? That is, if those who subsist on hunting were to lose the mountain forests or the birds and the beasts, the source of their livelihood would be gone. The direction in which this ethnicity and this sort of people should go would become uncertain, and they might even disappear. And what of those who herd animals for their livelihood? What do they rely upon? What they truly depend on is not their livestock, but the environment in which their livestock are able to survive—the grasslands. If there were no grasslands, where would the herders graze their livestock? What would the cattle and sheep eat? Without the livestock, these nomadic peoples would have no livelihood. Without a source for their livelihood, where would these peoples go? It would become very difficult for them to continue to survive; they would not have a future. If there were no sources of water, and rivers and lakes completely dried up, would all those fish, which depend on water to live, still exist? They would not. Would these people who depend on the water and the fish for their livelihood continue to survive? When they no longer have food, when they no longer have the source of their livelihood, these peoples would not be able to continue to survive. That is, if any given ethnicity should ever run into a problem with their livelihood or their survival, then that ethnicity would no longer continue, and they could disappear from the face of the earth and become extinct. And if those who farm for a living lost their land, if they could not cultivate all kinds of plants and derive food from those plants, then what would the outcome be? Without food, would people not starve to death? If people are starving to death, would that race of human beings not be wiped out? So this is God's purpose in

maintaining different kinds of environment. God only has one purpose in maintaining different environments and ecosystems and all the different living beings within them—and that is to nurture all kinds of people, to nurture people who live in different geographical environments.

If all the things of creation lost their own laws, they would no longer exist; if the laws of all things were lost, then the living beings amongst all things would not be able to continue. Humanity would also lose their environments upon which they depend for survival. If humanity lost all of that, they would not be able to continue, as they have been doing, to thrive and multiply generation after generation. The reason human beings have survived until now is because God has supplied them with all the things of creation to nurture them, to nurture mankind in different ways. It is only because God nurtures mankind in different ways that mankind has survived until now, the present day. With a fixed environment for survival that is favorable and in which the natural laws are in good order, all the different kinds of people of the earth, all the different races, can survive within their own prescribed areas. No one can go beyond these areas or the boundaries between them because it is God who has delineated them. Why would God delineate boundaries in this way? This is a matter of great importance for all of mankind—truly of great importance! God delineated a range for each kind of living being and fixed the means of survival for each type of human being. He also divided the different types of people and different races on the earth and established a range for them. This is what we will discuss next.

The Fourth Part: God Draws Boundaries Between Different Races

Fourth, God drew boundaries between different races. On earth there are white people, black people, brown people, and yellow people. These are the different types of people. God also fixed a scope for the lives of these different types of people, and without being aware of it, people live within their appropriate environment for survival under God's management. No one can step outside of this. For example, let us consider white people. What is the geographical range in which most of them live? Most live in Europe and America. The geographical range in which black people primarily live is Africa. Brown people primarily live in Southeast Asia and South Asia, in countries such as Thailand, India, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Laos. Yellow people live primarily in Asia, that is, in countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea. God has appropriately distributed all these different types of races so that these different races are distributed across different parts of the world. In these different parts of the world, God long ago prepared an environment for survival suitable for each different race of human beings. Within these survival environments, God has prepared for them soils of varying color and makeup. In other words, the components making up white people's bodies are not the same as those that make up black people's bodies, and they are also different from the components that make up the bodies of people of other races. When God created

all things. He had already prepared an environment for survival for that race. His purpose in doing so was that when that type of people started to multiply, and to increase in number, they could be fixed within a certain range. Before God created human beings, He had already thought it all out—He would reserve Europe and America for white people to allow them to develop and survive. So when God was creating the earth He already had a plan, He had a goal and a purpose in putting what He put into that piece of land, and in nurturing what He nurtured on that piece of land. For example, what mountains, how many plains, how many water sources, what kinds of birds and beasts, what fish, and what plants would be on that land, God had prepared them all long ago. When preparing an environment for survival for a given type of human being, for a given race, God needed to consider many issues from all sorts of angles: the geographical environment, the makeup of the soil, the different species of birds and beasts, the size of the different types of fish, the components making up the bodies of fish, differences in water quality, as well as all the different types of plants.... God had long ago prepared all of that. That kind of environment is an environment for survival that God created and prepared for white people and that inherently belongs to them. Have you seen that when God created all things He put a lot of thought into it and acted with a plan? (Yes, we have seen that God's considerations for various types of people were very thoughtful. For the environment for survival that He created for different types of humans, what kinds of birds and beasts and fish, how many mountains and how many plains He would prepare, He considered with the utmost thoughtfulness and precision.) Take white people for example. What foods do white people primarily eat? The foods that white people eat are very different from the foods that Asian people eat. The staple foods that white people eat consist mainly of meat, eggs, milk, and poultry. Grains such as bread and rice are generally supplementary foods that are put on the side of the plate. Even when eating vegetable salad, they tend to put in a few pieces of roast beef or chicken, and even when eating wheat-based foods, they tend to add cheese, eggs, or meat. That is to say, their staple foods do not consist primarily of wheat-based foods or rice; they eat a large amount of meat and cheese. They often drink ice water because the foods they eat are very high in calories. So, white people are exceptionally robust. Such is the source of their livelihood and the living environments prepared for them by God, which allow them to have this way of life, one that is different from the lifestyles of people of other races. There is no right or wrong in this way of life—it is innate, predestined by God, and it arises from God's dictates and His arrangements. That this race has this way of life and these sources for their livelihood is because of their race, and because of the environment for survival prepared for them by God. You could say that the environment for survival God prepared for white people, and the daily sustenance they derive from that environment, is rich and plentiful.

God also prepared the necessary environments for the survival for other races. There are also black people—where are black people located? They are primarily

located in central and southern Africa. What did God prepare for them in that kind of environment for living? Tropical rainforests, all sorts of birds and beasts, and also deserts, and all kinds of plants that live alongside the people. They have sources for water, their livelihoods, and food. God was not biased against them. No matter what they have ever done, their survival has never been an issue. They too occupy a certain location and a certain area in a part of the world.

Now, let us talk about yellow people. Yellow people are primarily located in the East of the earth. What are the differences between the environments and geographical positions of the East and the West? In the East, the majority of the land is fertile, and rich in materials and mineral deposits. That is, all sorts of above-ground and underground resources are plentiful. And for this group of people, for this race, God also prepared the corresponding soil, climate, and the various geographical environments that are suitable for them. Although there are great differences between that geographical environment and the environment in the West, people's necessary food, livelihoods, and sources for survival were also prepared by God. It is just a different environment for living than white people have in the West. But what is the one thing that I need to tell you? The number of people of the Eastern race is relatively large, so God added a lot of elements in that part of the earth that are different from the West. There, He added many different landscapes and all kinds of abundant materials. Natural resources there are very abundant; the terrain is also varied and diverse, adequate for nurturing the enormous number of people of the Eastern race. What differentiates the East from the West is that in the East—from south to north, east to west—the climate is better than the West. The four seasons are clearly distinct, temperatures are suitable, natural resources are abundant, and the natural scenery and types of terrain are much better than in the West. Why did God do this? God created a very rational balance between white people and yellow people. What does this mean? It means that all aspects of white people's food, the things that they use, and the things provided for their enjoyment are far better than what yellow people are able to enjoy. However, God is not biased against any race. God gave yellow people a more beautiful and better environment for survival. This is the balance.

God has preordained which types of people should live in which part of the world; can humans go beyond these limits? (No, they cannot.) What a wondrous thing! Even if there are wars or encroachments during different eras or in extraordinary times, these wars and encroachments absolutely cannot destroy the environments for survival that God has predestined for each race. That is, God has fixed a certain type of people in a certain part of the world and they cannot go beyond those limits. Even if people have some kind of ambition to change or expand their territory, without God's permission, this will be very difficult to achieve. It will be very difficult for them to succeed. For example, white people wanted to expand their territory and they colonized some other countries. The Germans invaded some countries, and Britain once occupied India. What was the

outcome? In the end, they failed. What do we see from their failure? What God has predestined is not permitted to be destroyed. So, no matter how great the momentum you may have seen in Britain's expansion, ultimately they still had to withdraw, leaving the land still belonging to India. Those who live on that land are still Indians, not the British, because God would not allow it. Some of those who research history or politics have provided theses on this. They give reasons for why Britain failed, saying that it could be because a certain ethnicity could not be conquered, or it could be for some other human reason.... These are not real reasons. The real reason is because of God—He would not allow it! God lets an ethnicity live on a certain piece of land and settles them there, and if God does not allow them to move from that land, they will never be able to move. If God allots a defined area for them, they will live within that area. Mankind cannot break free or extricate themselves from these defined areas. This is certain. No matter how great the forces of the encroachers, or how weak those who are being encroached upon, the invaders' success is ultimately for God to decide. It is already predestined by Him, and no one can change it.

The above is how God has distributed the various races. What work has God done to distribute the races? First, He prepared the large-scale geographical environment, allocating different locations for people, after which generation after generation survived in those places. This is settled—the defined area for their survival is settled. And their lives, what they eat, what they drink, their livelihoods—God long since settled all of that. And when God was creating all things, He made different preparations for different types of people: There are different soil compositions, different climates, different plants, and different geographical environments. Different places even have different birds and beasts, different waters have their own special types of fish and aquatic products. Even the types of insects are determined by God. For example, the things that grow on the American continent are all very large, very tall and very robust. The roots of the trees in the mountain forest are all very shallow, but they grow very tall. They can even reach heights of a hundred meters or more, but the trees in the forests in Asia are mostly not so tall. Take aloe plants for example. In Japan they are very narrow and very thin, but the aloe plants in the United States are very large. There is a difference here. It is the same type of plant with the same name, but on the American continent it grows especially large. The differences in these various aspects may not be seen or perceived by people, but when God was creating all things, He delineated them and prepared different geographical environments, different terrains, and different living things for different races. That is because God created different types of people and He knows what each of them needs and what their lifestyles are.

God Rules Over All and Provides for All, He Is the God of All Things

After talking about some of these things, now do you feel you have learned something about the main topic we just discussed? Do you feel you are starting to

understand it? I believe you should now have a rough idea of why I chose to talk about these aspects within the broader topic. Is that the case? Perhaps you could talk a little about how much of it you understood. (All of mankind has been nurtured by the laws determined by God for all things. When God was determining these laws, He provided different races with different environments, different lifestyles, different foods, and different climates and temperatures. This was so that all of mankind could settle on the earth and survive. From this I can see God's plans for mankind's survival are very precise and I can see His wisdom and perfection, and His love for us humans.) (The laws and scopes determined by God cannot be changed by any person, event, or thing. It is all under His rule.) Looking from the perspective of the laws determined by God for the growth of all things, is not all of mankind, in all its variety, provided for and nurtured by God? If these laws were destroyed or if God had not established these laws for mankind, what would mankind's prospects be? After humans lost their basic environments for survival, would they have any source of food? It is possible that food sources would become a problem. If people lost their sources of food, that is, if they could not get anything to eat, how many days would they be able to carry on? Possibly they would not last for even a single month, and their very survival would become a problem. So every single thing that God does for people's survival, for their continuing existence, reproduction, and subsistence is very important. Every single thing that God does among the things of His creation is closely related to and inseparable from the survival of mankind. If mankind's survival became a problem, could God's management continue? Would God's management still exist? God's management coexists with the survival of all mankind whom He nurtures, so no matter what preparations God makes for all things of His creation and what He does for humans, this is all necessary for Him, and it is critical for mankind's survival. If these laws that God determined for all things were departed from, if these laws were broken or disrupted, all things would no longer be able to exist, mankind's environment for survival would not continue to exist, nor their daily sustenance, nor mankind itself. For this reason, God's management of mankind's salvation would also cease to exist.

Everything that we have discussed, every single thing, every item is intimately linked to the survival of every single person. You might say, "What You are talking about is too big, it is not something that we can see," and perhaps there are people who would say, "What You are talking about has nothing to do with me." However, do not forget that you are living as just a part of all things; you are one among all the things of creation under God's rule. The things of God's creation cannot be separated from His rule, and not a single person can separate themselves from His rule. Losing His rule and losing His provision would mean that people's lives, people's fleshly lives, would disappear. This is the importance of God establishing environments for survival for mankind. It does not matter what race you belong to or what piece of land you live on, be it in the West or the East—you cannot separate yourself from the environment for survival that God has

established for mankind, and you cannot separate yourself from the nurture and provisions of the environment for survival He has established for humans. No matter what your livelihood is, what you rely on to live, and what you rely on to sustain your life in the flesh, you cannot separate yourself from God's rule and His management. Some people say: "I am not a farmer; I don't plant crops for a living. I don't rely on the heavens for my food, so my survival is not taking place within the environment for survival established by God. I have not been given anything from that kind of environment." Is that right? You say that you do not plant crops for your living, but do you not eat grains? Do you not eat meat and eggs? And do you not eat vegetables and fruit? Everything that you eat, all of these things that you need, are inseparable from the environment for survival established by God for mankind. And the source of everything that mankind requires cannot be separated from all the things created by God, which in their totality constitute your environments for survival. The water you drink, the clothing you wear and all the things that you use—which of these is not obtained from among the things of God's creation? Some people say: "There are some items that are not obtained from the things of God's creation. You see, plastic is one of those items. It is a chemical thing, a man-made thing." Is that right? Plastic is indeed man-made, and it is a chemical thing, but where did the original components of plastic come from? The original components were obtained from materials created by God. The things that you see and enjoy, every single thing that you use, it is all obtained from the things which God created. That is to say, no matter what race a person might belong to, no matter what livelihood, or in what type of environment for survival they might live, they cannot separate themselves from what God has provided. So are these things that we have discussed today related to our topic of "God Is the Source of Life for All Things"? Do the things we have discussed today fall under this larger topic? (Yes.) Perhaps some of what I have talked about today is a little abstract and difficult to discuss. However, I think that you probably have a better understanding of it now.

These last few times in fellowship, the range of the topics that we have had fellowship on has been rather broad, and their scope rather wide, so it takes some effort for you to take it all in. This is because these topics are things that have never been dealt with before in people's belief in God. Some people hear these things as a mystery and some people hear them as a story—which perspective is right? From what perspective do you hear all of this? (We have seen how methodically God has arranged all the things of His creation and that all things have laws, and through these words we can understand more of God's deeds and His meticulous arrangements for the salvation of mankind.) Through these times in fellowship, have you seen how far the scope of God's management of all things extends? (Over all of mankind, over everything.) Is God the God of one race only? Is He the God of one type of people? Is He the God of just a small portion of mankind? (No, He is not.) Since that is not the case, if, according to your knowledge of God, He is only the God of a small portion of mankind, or if He is your God alone, is this perspective

correct? Since God manages and rules over all things, people should see His deeds, His wisdom, and His almightiness that are revealed in His rule over all things. This is something that people must know. If you say that God manages all things, rules over all things, and rules over all of mankind, but if you have no understanding of or insight into His rule over mankind, can you really acknowledge that He rules over all things? You may think in your heart, "I can, because I see that my life is ruled over entirely by God." But is God really that small? No, He is not! You only see God's salvation for you and His work in you, and it is from these things alone that you see His rule. That is too small of a scope, and it has a detrimental impact on your prospects for genuine knowledge of God. It also limits your genuine knowledge of God's rule over all things. If you limit your knowledge of God to the scope of what God provides for you and His salvation for you, you will never be able to recognize that He rules over everything, that He rules over all things, and rules over all of mankind. When you fail to recognize all of this, can you truly recognize the fact that God rules over your fate? No, you cannot. In your heart you will never be able to recognize that aspect—you will never be able to reach such a high level of understanding. You understand what I am saying, yes? Actually, I know to what degree you are able to understand these topics, this content that I am talking about, so why do I keep talking about it? It is because these topics are things that must be appreciated by every single follower of God, every single person who wants to be saved by God—it is essential to understand these topics. Even though at this moment you do not understand them, someday, when your life and your experience of the truth reach a certain level, when the change in your life disposition reaches a certain level and you attain a certain degree of stature, only then will these topics that I am communicating to you in fellowship truly provide for and satisfy your pursuit of knowledge of God. So these words are to lay a foundation, to prepare you for your future understanding that God rules over all things and for your understanding of God Himself.

However much understanding of God there is in people's hearts, that is also the extent of the position He holds in their hearts. However great the degree of knowledge of God is in their hearts, that is how great God is in their hearts. If the God that you know is empty and vague, then the God you believe in is also empty and vague. The God that you know is limited to the scope of your own personal life, and has nothing to do with the true God Himself. Thus, knowing God's practical actions, knowing the reality of God and His omnipotence, knowing the true identity of God Himself, knowing what He has and is, knowing the actions that He has manifested among all the things of His creation—these things are very important to every single person who pursues knowledge of God. They have a direct bearing on whether people can enter into the reality of the truth. If you limit your understanding of God to just words, if you limit it to your own little experiences, to what you figure to be God's grace, or your little testimonies to God, then I say that the God you believe in is absolutely not the true God Himself. Not only that, but it can also be said that the God you believe in is an imaginary God, not the true God.

This is because the true God is the One that rules over everything, that walks among everything, that manages everything. He is the One that holds the fate of all of mankind and of everything in His hands. The work and actions of the God that I am talking about are not just limited to a small portion of people. That is, they are not limited to just the people who currently follow Him. His deeds are manifested among all things, in the survival of all things, and in the laws of change of all things. If you cannot see or recognize any deeds of God among all the things of His creation, then you cannot bear witness to any of His deeds. If you cannot bear witness for God, if you continue to speak of the small so-called "God" that you know, that God who is limited to your own ideas and exists only within the narrow confines of your mind, if you continue to speak of that kind of God, then God will never praise your faith. When you bear witness for God, if you do so only in terms of how you enjoy God's grace, how you accept God's discipline and His chastening, and how you enjoy His blessings in your witness for Him, then that is nowhere near enough and not even close to satisfying Him. If you want to bear witness for God in a way that accords with His will, to bear witness for the true God Himself, then you must see what God has and is from His actions. You must see God's authority from His control of everything, and see the truth of how He provides for all of mankind. If you only acknowledge that your daily sustenance and your necessities in life come from God, but you fail to see the truth that God has taken all the things of His creation for the provision of all of mankind, and that, by ruling over all things, He is leading all of mankind, then you will never be able to bear witness for God. What is My purpose in saying all of this? It is so that you do not take this lightly, so that you do not mistakenly believe that these topics I have spoken about are irrelevant to your own personal entry into life, and so that you do not take these topics as being just a type of knowledge or doctrine. If you listen to what I am saying with that kind of attitude, then you will not gain a single thing. You will lose this great opportunity to know God.

What is My goal in talking about all of these things? My goal is to have people know God, to have people understand God's practical actions. Once you understand God and you know His actions, only then do you have the opportunity or the possibility to know Him. If, for example, you want to understand a person, how would you come to understand them? Would it be through looking at their outward appearance? Would it be through looking at what they wear and how they dress? Would it be through looking at how they walk? Would it be through looking at the scope of their knowledge? (No.) So how do you understand a person? You make judgments based on a person's speech and behavior, their thoughts and the things they express and reveal about themselves. This is how you get to know a person, how you understand a person. Likewise, if you want to know God, if you want to understand His practical side, His true side, you must know Him through His deeds and through every single practical thing He does. This is the best way, and it is the only way.

God Balances the Relationships Between All Things to Give Mankind a Stable Environment for Survival

God manifests His deeds among all things, and among all things He rules over and controls the laws of all things. We just talked about how God rules over the laws of all things as well as how He provides for and nurtures all of mankind under those laws. This is one aspect. Next, we are going to talk about another aspect, which is one way that God uses to have control over everything. I am speaking of how, after creating all things, God balanced the relationships between them. This is also rather a large topic for you. Balancing the relationships between all things—is this something that people can accomplish? No, humans are incapable of such a feat. People are capable only of destruction. They cannot balance the relationships between all things; they cannot manage them, and such great authority and power are beyond the grasp of mankind. Only God Himself has the power to do this kind of thing. But what is God's purpose in doing such a thing—what is it for? This too is closely related to mankind's survival. Every single thing that God wants to do is necessary—there is nothing that He may or may not do. In order for Him to safeguard the survival of mankind and give people a favorable environment for survival, there are some indispensable, vital things that He must do.

From the literal meaning of the phrase, "God balances all things," it seems a very sweeping topic. First, it provides people with the concept that "balancing all things" also refers to God's mastery over all things. What does this word, "balance," mean? First, "balance" refers to not allowing something to fall out of balance. It is like using scales to weigh things. In order to balance the scales, the weight upon each side must be the same. God created many different types of things: things that are set in their place, things that move, things that are living, things that are breathing, as well as things that do not breathe. Is it easy for all these things to achieve a relationship of interdependence, of interconnectedness, where they both reinforce each other and keep each other in check? There certainly are principles within all of this, but they are very complicated, are they not? It is not difficult for God, but for people it is a very complicated matter to study. It is a very simple word, "balance." However, if people were to study it, and if people needed to create balance by themselves, then even if all kinds of academics were working on it—human biologists, astronomers, physicists, chemists and even historians—what would the ultimate outcome of that research be? Its outcome would be nothing. This is because God's creation of all things is too incredible, and mankind will never unlock its secrets. When God created all things, He established principles between them, established different ways of survival for mutual restraint, complementarity, and sustenance. These various methods are very intricate, and they are certainly not simple or unidirectional. When people use their minds, the knowledge they have gained, and the phenomena they have observed to confirm or study the principles behind God's control over all things, these things are extremely difficult to discover, and it is also very

difficult to achieve any outcome. It is very hard for people to get any results; it is very difficult for people to maintain their balance when relying on human thinking and knowledge to govern all the things of God's creation. This is because if people do not know the principles of survival of all things, they will not know how to safeguard this type of balance. So, if people were to manage and govern all things, they would be very likely to destroy this balance. As soon as the balance was destroyed, mankind's environments for survival would be destroyed, and when that happened, it would be followed by a crisis for the survival of mankind. It would bring about a disaster. If humanity is living amidst disaster, what would their future be? The outcome would be very difficult to assess, and impossible to predict with certainty.

So, how does God balance the relationships between all things? First, there are some places in the world that are covered with ice and snow year-round, while in some other places, all four seasons are like spring, and winter never comes, and in places like this, you will never see so much as a patch of ice or a single snowflake. Here, we are speaking about the larger climate, and this example is one of the ways in which God balances the relationships between all things. The second way is this: A range of mountains are covered in lush vegetation, with all kinds of plants carpeting the ground, and swaths of forest so dense that when you walk through them you cannot even see the sun above. But looking at another range of mountains, there is not even a single blade of grass growing, just layer upon layer of barren, unkempt mountains. In outward appearance, both types are basically great piles of dirt stacked up to form mountains, but one is covered in dense forest, while the other is devoid of growth, without even a blade of grass. This is the second way that God balances the relationships between all things. The third way is this: Looking one way, you might see endless grasslands, a field of waving green. Looking the other way, you might see desert as far as the eye can see, barren, without a single living thing amidst the hissing wind-blown sand, much less any source of water. The fourth way is this: Looking one way, everything is submerged under the sea, that great body of water, while looking the other way, you are hard-pressed to find even a drop of fresh spring water. The fifth way is this: In the land over here, drizzling rain is frequent and the climate is foggy and damp, while in the land over there, a fierce sun often hangs in the sky, and it is a rare event when even a single drop of rain falls. The sixth way is this: In one place there is a plateau where the air is thin and it is difficult for man to breathe, while in another place there are swamps and lowlands, which serve as habitats for various types of migratory birds. These are different types of climates, or they are climates or environments that correspond to different geographical environments. That is to say, God balances mankind's basic environments for survival in terms of the large-scale environment, from the climate to the geographical environment, and from the different components of the soil to the number of water sources, all in order to achieve a balance in the air, temperature and humidity of the environments that people survive in. Because of these contrasting geographical

environments, people have stable air, and the temperature and humidity of the different seasons remain stable. This allows people to continue to live in that kind of environment for survival just as they always have. First, the large-scale environment must be balanced. This is done through the utilization of different geographical locations and formations as well as the changes between different climates which allow them to limit and check each other in order to achieve the balance that God wants and that mankind requires. This is speaking from the perspective of the large-scale environment.

Now we will speak about the finer details, such as vegetation. How is their balance achieved? That is to say, how can vegetation be enabled to continue to survive within a balanced environment for survival? The answer is, by managing the lifespan, growth rates, and reproduction rates of various types of plants to safeguard their environment for survival. Let us take the tiny grasses as an example—there are spring shoots, summer blooms, and autumn fruit. The fruit falls to the ground. The next year, the seed from the fruit sprouts and continues according to the same laws. The lifespan of the grass is very short; every seed falls to the ground, grows roots and sprouts, blooms and produces fruit, and the entire process is complete after only three seasons—spring, summer, and fall. Trees of all kinds also have their own lifespans and different periods for sprouting and fruiting. Some trees die after just 30 to 50 years—this is their lifespan. But their fruit falls to the ground, which then grows roots and sprouts, flowers and bears fruit, and lives for another 30 to 50 years. This is its rate of recurrence. An old tree dies and a young tree grows; this is why you can always see trees growing in the forest. But they also have their normal cycle and processes of birth and death. Some trees can live for over a thousand years, and some can even live for three thousand years. No matter what type of plant it is or how long its lifespan, generally speaking, God manages its balance based on how long it lives, its ability to reproduce, its speed and frequency of reproduction and the amount of offspring it produces. This allows plants, from the grasses to the trees, to be able to continue to thrive and grow within a balanced ecological environment. So when you look at a forest on earth, everything that grows within it, grasses and trees both, are continuously reproducing and growing according to their own laws. They do not need any additional labor or help from mankind. It is only because they have this kind of balance that they are able to maintain their own environment for survival. It is only because they have a suitable environment for survival that the world's forests and grasslands are able to continue to survive on earth. Their existence nurtures generation after generation of people as well as generation after generation of all sorts of living things with habitats in the forests and the grasslands birds and beasts, insects, and all kinds of microorganisms.

God also controls the balance between all kinds of animals. How does He control this balance? It is similar to plants—He manages their balance and determines their numbers based on their ability to reproduce, their quantity and frequency of reproduction and the roles they play in the animal world. For example, lions eat zebras,

so if the number of lions exceeded the number of zebras, what would the fate of the zebras be? They would become extinct. And if zebras produced far fewer offspring than the lions, what would their fate be? They would also become extinct. So, the number of zebras must be far greater than the number of lions. This is because zebras do not only exist for themselves, but they also exist for the lions. You could also put it this way: Every zebra is one part of the entirety of zebras, but it is also food for the lions' mouths. Lions' speed of reproduction can never outstrip that of the zebras, so their numbers can never be greater than the zebras' numbers. Only in this way can the lions' food source be guaranteed. And so, even though lions are natural enemies of zebras, people frequently see the two species resting at leisure within the same area. Zebras will never be reduced in number or go extinct because of lions hunting and eating them, and lions will never increase their numbers because of their status as "king." This balance is something that God established long ago. That is, God established laws of balance between all animals so that they can achieve this kind of balance, and this is something that people often see. Are lions the only natural enemies of zebras? No, crocodiles also eat zebras. Zebras seem to be a very helpless type of animal. They do not have the ferocity of lions, and when facing a lion, this formidable enemy, all they can do is run. They are powerless even to resist. When they cannot outrun the lion, they can only allow themselves to be eaten by it. This can be seen frequently in the animal world. What feelings and thoughts do you have when you see this kind of thing? Do you feel sorry for the zebra? Do you detest the lion? The zebras look so beautiful! But the lions, they are always eyeing them greedily. And foolishly, the zebras do not run far. They see the lion there waiting for them in the cool shade under a tree. It could come and eat them at any moment. They know this in their hearts, but still they will not leave that piece of land. This is a wondrous thing, a wondrous thing which manifests God's predestination and His rule. You feel sorry for the zebra but you are unable to save it, and you detest the lion but you cannot destroy it. The zebra is food that God has prepared for the lion, but no matter how many the lions eat, the zebras will not be wiped out. The number of offspring that lions produce is very small, and they reproduce very slowly, so no matter how many zebras they eat, their numbers will never surpass those of the zebras. In this, there is balance.

What is God's goal in maintaining this kind of balance? This has to do with people's environments for survival as well as the survival of mankind. If zebras, or any similar prey of a lion—deer or other animals—reproduce too slowly and the number of lions sharply increases, what kind of danger would human beings face? Lions eating their prey is a normal phenomenon, but a lion eating a person is a tragedy. This tragedy is not something predestined by God, it is not something that occurs under His rule, much less something He has brought upon mankind. Rather, it is something that people bring upon themselves. So as God sees it, the balance between all things is crucial for the survival of mankind. Whether it be plants or animals, nothing can lose its proper

balance. Plants, animals, mountains, and lakes—God has prepared for mankind a regular ecological environment. Only when people have this kind of ecological environment—a balanced one—is their survival secure. If trees or grasses had a poor ability to reproduce or their speed of reproduction was very slow, would the soil not lose its moisture? If the soil lost its moisture, would it still be healthy? If the soil lost its vegetation and its moisture, it would erode very quickly, and sand would form in its place. When the soil deteriorated, people's environment for survival would also be destroyed. Many disasters would accompany this destruction. Without this kind of ecological balance, without this type of ecological environment, people would frequently suffer from disasters due to imbalances between all things. For example, when there is an environmental imbalance leading to the destruction of frogs' ecological environment, they all gather together, their numbers sharply increase, and people even see large numbers of frogs crossing the streets in cities. If large numbers of frogs occupied people's environment for survival, what would that be called? A disaster. Why would it be called a disaster? These small animals that are beneficial for mankind are useful for people when they remain in a place that is suitable for them; they can maintain the balance of people's environment for survival. But if they become a disaster, they will impact the orderliness of people's lives. All the things and all the elements that frogs bring along with them on their bodies can impact people's quality of life. They can even cause people's physical organs to be attacked—this is one of the kinds of disasters. Another kind of disaster, which is something that humans have experienced frequently, is the appearance of great numbers of locusts. Is this not a disaster? Yes, it truly is a frightening disaster. It does not matter how capable humans may be—people can make airplanes, cannons, and atomic bombs—when the locusts invade, what solution does mankind have? Can they use cannons on them? Can they shoot them with machine guns? No, they cannot. Then can they spray pesticides to drive them out? That is no easy task, either. What do those tiny locusts come to do? They specifically eat crops and grains. Wherever locusts go, crops are completely obliterated. In times of a locust invasion, all the food that farmers rely upon for an entire year could be entirely consumed by the locusts in the blink of an eye. For humans, the arrival of locusts is not only an irritation—it is a disaster. So, we know that the appearance of great numbers of locusts is a type of disaster, but what about mice? If there are no birds of prey to eat mice, then they will multiply very rapidly, more rapidly than you can even imagine. And if mice spread unchecked, can humans lead good lives? What kind of situation would humans be confronted with? (An epidemic.) But do you think an epidemic would be the only consequence? Mice will chew on anything, and they will even gnaw on wood. If there are just two mice in one house, they will be a nuisance to everyone who lives there. Sometimes they steal oil and eat it, and sometimes they eat the bread or cereals. And the things that they do not eat they just chew up and turn them into a complete mess. They chew on clothing, shoes, furniturethey chew on everything. Sometimes they will climb up onto the cupboard—can those dishes still be used after mice have trodden on them? Even if you do disinfect them you still will not feel at ease, so you just throw them out. These are the annoyances that mice bring to people. Though mice are tiny creatures, people have no way of dealing with them, and instead just have to put up with their depredations. Just a single pair of mice is enough to cause a disruption, let alone a great horde of them. If their numbers were to swell and they became a disaster, the consequences would be unthinkable. Even creatures as tiny as ants could become a disaster. If that were to happen, the damage they would do to mankind could also not be ignored. Ants can cause so much damage to houses that they collapse. Their strength must not be overlooked. Would it not be frightening if different kinds of birds created a disaster? (Yes.) To put it another way, whenever animals or living things, no matter what kind they are, lose their balance, they will grow, reproduce, and live within an abnormal scope, an irregular scope. That would bring unimaginable consequences to mankind. That would not only impact people's survival and lives, but it would also bring disaster to mankind, even to the point of people suffering the fate of complete annihilation and extinction.

When God created all things, He used all sorts of methods and ways to balance them, to balance the living conditions of the mountains and lakes, of the plants and all kinds of animals, birds, and insects. His goal was to allow all kinds of living beings to live and multiply under the laws that He had established. None of the things of creation can go outside of these laws, and the laws cannot be broken. Only within this type of basic environment can humans safely survive and multiply, generation after generation. If any living creature goes beyond the quantity or scope established by God, or if it exceeds the growth rate, reproduction frequency, or number dictated by Him, mankind's environment for survival would suffer varying degrees of destruction. And at the same time, mankind's survival would be threatened. If one type of living creature is too great in number, it will rob people of their food, destroy people's water sources, and ruin their homelands. That way, mankind's reproduction or state of survival would be immediately impacted. For example, water is very important for all things. If there are too many mice, ants, locusts, frogs, or any kind of other animal, they will drink more water. As the amount of water they drink increases, people's drinking water and water sources within the fixed scope of sources of drinking water and aqueous areas will be reduced and they will experience water shortages. If people's drinking water is destroyed, contaminated, or is cut off because all kinds of animals have increased in number, under that kind of harsh environment for survival, mankind's survival will be seriously threatened. If just one type or several types of living beings exceed their appropriate number, then the air, temperature, humidity, and even the composition of the air within mankind's space for survival will be poisoned and destroyed to varying degrees. Under these circumstances, humans' survival and fate will also be subject to the threats posed by these ecological

factors. So, if these balances are lost, the air that people breathe will be ruined, the water that they drink will be contaminated, and the temperatures that they require will also change and be impacted to varying degrees. If that happens, the environments for survival that inherently belong to mankind will be subject to enormous impacts and challenges. In this type of scenario where humans' basic environments for survival have been destroyed, what would mankind's fate and prospects be? This is a very serious problem! Because God knows for what reason each of the things of creation exists for the sake of mankind, what the role is of every type of thing that He created, what kind of impact each thing has on mankind, and to what degree it benefits mankind, because in God's heart there is a plan for all of this and He manages every single aspect of all the things that He created, that is why every single thing that He does is so important and necessary for mankind. So from now on, whenever you observe some ecological phenomenon among the things of God's creation, or some natural law at play among the things of God's creation, you will no longer be doubtful of the necessity of every single thing created by God. You will no longer use ignorant words to make arbitrary judgments on God's arrangements of all things and His various ways of providing for mankind. Nor will you come to arbitrary conclusions about God's laws for all the things of His creation. Is this not the case?

What is all of this that we have just been talking about? Think about it for a moment. God has His own intention in every single thing that He does. Even though His intention is inscrutable to humans, it is always inextricably and powerfully related to mankind's survival. It is absolutely indispensable. This is because God has never done anything that is futile. The principles behind every single thing that He does are infused with His plan and His wisdom. The goal and intention behind that plan are for the protection of mankind, to help mankind avert disaster, the depredations of other living beings, and any kind of harm to humans caused by any of the things of God's creation. So could it be said that the deeds of God which we have seen within this topic constitute another way in which God provides for mankind? Could we say that, through these deeds, God is feeding and shepherding mankind? (Yes.) Is there a strong relationship between this topic and the theme of our fellowship: "God Is the Source of Life for All Things"? (Yes.) There is a very strong relationship, and this topic is one aspect of that. Before talking about these topics, people only had some vague imagination of God, of God Himself and His deeds—they lacked true understanding. However, when people are told about His deeds and the things He has done, they can understand and comprehend the principles of what God does and they can gain understanding of them and come within reach of them. Even though in God's heart there are all kinds of very complicated theories, principles, and rules whenever He does anything, like creating and ruling over all things, is it not possible for you to gain understanding in your hearts that these are God's deeds and that they are as real as can be, just by letting you learn about a single part of them in fellowship? (Yes.) Then how is your current understanding of God

different from before? It is different in its substance. Before, your understanding was too hollow, too vague, but now your understanding contains a great deal of concrete evidence to match God's deeds, to match what God has and is. Therefore, all that I have said is wonderful educational material for your understanding of God.

February 9, 2014

God Himself, the Unique X God Is the Source of Life for All Things (IV)

We are communing on a special topic today. For each and every believer, there are only two main things that need to be known, experienced, and understood. What are these two things? The first is one's individual entry into life, and the second relates to knowing God. Regarding the topic we have recently been communicating about, on the subject of knowing God, do you think that it is attainable? It is fair to say that it is indeed beyond most people's reach. You might not be convinced by My words, but why do I say this? I say it because when you were listening to what I was saying before, regardless of how I said it or with what words, you were able, both literally and theoretically, to know what these words were about. However, for all of you, a very serious issue was that you did not understand why I said such things or why I spoke on such topics. This is the crux of the matter. Thus, although your having heard these things added a bit to and enriched your understanding of God and His deeds, you still feel that knowing God entails strenuous effort. That is, after hearing what I say, most of you do not understand why I have said it or what connection it has to knowing God. The reason you are unable to understand its connection to knowing God is that your life experience is too superficial. If people's knowledge and experience of God's words remain at a very shallow level. then most of their knowledge of Him will be vague and abstract; it will all be general, doctrinal, and theoretical. In theory, it might appear or sound logical and reasonable, but the knowledge of God that comes out of most people's mouths is actually empty. And why do I say that it is empty? It is because you do not actually have a clear understanding as to the veracity and accuracy of what you yourself say with regard to knowing God. As such, even though most people have heard a lot of information and topics about knowing God, their knowledge of God has yet to go beyond theory and beyond doctrine that is vague and abstract. How, then, can this problem be solved? Have you ever thought about that? If someone does not pursue the truth, can they be possessed of reality? If someone does not pursue the truth, then they are unquestionably without reality, and they therefore definitely have no knowledge or experience of God's words. Can those who have no understanding of God's words know God? Absolutely not; the two are interconnected. Therefore, most people say, "Why is knowing God so difficult? When I speak of knowing myself, I can go on for hours, but when it comes to knowing God, I'm lost for words. Even when I can say a bit on the subject, my words are forced and sound dull. It even sounds awkward when I hear myself saying them." This is the source. If you feel that knowing God is too difficult, that knowing Him takes a lot of effort, or that you have no topics to bring up and cannot think of anything real to commune and provide to others and yourself, then this proves that you are not someone who has experienced God's words. What are God's words? Are His words not expressions of what God has and is? If you have not experienced God's words, could you have any knowledge of what He has and is? Surely not. These things are all interconnected. If you have no experience of God's words, then you cannot grasp God's will, nor do you know what His disposition is, what He likes, what He loathes, what His requirements of people are, what sort of attitude He has toward those who are good, and what sort of attitude He has toward those who are evil; all of this is certainly ambiguous and obscure to you. If you believe in God amid such obscurity, then when you claim to be one of those who pursue the truth and follow God, are such claims realistic? They are not! Let us therefore continue to commune about knowing God.

You are all eager to hear today's topic for fellowship, right? This topic also relates to the subject, "God is the source of life for all things," which we have recently been discussing. We have talked a lot about how "God is the source of life for all things," using different means and perspectives to inform people about how God rules over everything, by what means He does so, and according to what principles He manages all things so that they might exist on this planet that God created. We have also talked a lot about how God provides for mankind: by what means He gives such provision, what kinds of living environments He provides people with, and by what means and from which starting points He provides a stable living environment for man. Although I have not spoken directly of the relationship between God's dominion over and administration of all things, and His management, I have indirectly spoken of the reasons He administers all things in this way, as well as of the reasons He provides for and nourishes mankind in this manner. All of this relates to His management. The content of which we have spoken has been very wide-ranging: from the macro environment, to much smaller things such as people's basic necessities and diet; from how God rules over all things and causes them to operate in an orderly fashion, to the right and proper living environment He created for the people of every race; and so on. This extensive content all relates to how humans live in the flesh—that is, it all relates to things of the material world that are visible to the naked eye, and which people can feel, such as mountains, rivers, oceans, plains, and so on. These are all things that can be seen and touched. When I talk of air and temperature, you can use your breath to feel the existence of air directly, and your body to sense whether the temperature is high or low. The trees, grass, and the birds and beasts in the forests, the things that fly in the air and walk on land, and the various little animals that emerge from burrows, can all be seen with people's own eyes and heard with their own ears. Though the scope touched upon by all these things is quite vast, of all the things God created, they represent only the material world. Material things are what people can see and feel, which is to say that when you touch them, you sense them, and when your eyes see them, your brain presents you with an image, a picture. They are things that are real and actual; to you they are not abstract, but have a shape. They may be square or round, or tall or short, and each object gives you a different impression. All these things represent that material aspect of creation. And so, for God, what do the "all things" in the phrase, "God's dominion over all things," include? They do

not simply include the things that humans can see and touch; in addition, they include all that is invisible and impalpable. This is one of the true meanings of God's dominion over all things. Even though such things are invisible and impalpable to humans, for God—as long as they can be observed by His eyes and are within the scope of His sovereignty—they actually exist. Despite the fact that they are abstract and unimaginable, and moreover are invisible and impalpable to humans, to God they actually and truly exist. This is another world among all the things over which God rules, and it is another part of the scope of all the things that He dominates. This is today's topic for fellowshiping: how God rules and administers the spiritual world. Since this topic covers how God rules and manages all things, it relates to the world outside of the material world—the spiritual world—and, thus, is absolutely vital for us to understand. Only after having communicated about and understood this content can people genuinely comprehend the true meaning of the words, "God is the source of life for all things." This is the reason we are going to discuss this topic; its purpose is to complete the subject of "God rules over all things, and God manages all things." Perhaps, when you hear this topic, it may feel strange or unfathomable to you, but no matter what you feel, since the spiritual world is one part of all the things ruled by God, you must gain some understanding of this topic. Once you do, you will have a deeper appreciation, understanding, and knowledge of the phrase, "God is the source of life for all things."

How God Rules and Administers the Spiritual World

For the material world, whenever people do not understand certain things or phenomena, they can search for relevant information or use various channels to find out those things' origins and background. But when it comes to the other world about which we are talking today—the spiritual world, which exists outside of the material world—people have absolutely no means or channels by which to learn anything about it. Why do I say this? I say it because, in the world of mankind, everything of the material world is inseparable from the physical existence of man, and because people feel that everything of the material world is inseparable from their physical living and physical lives, most people are only aware of, or see, the material things before their eyes that are visible to them. However, when it comes to the spiritual world—which is to say, everything that is of that other world—it would be fair to say that most people do not believe. Because people cannot see it, and believe there is no need to understand it or to know anything about it, to say nothing of how the spiritual world is a completely different world to the material world and, from God's point of view, is open—although, for humans, it is secret and closed—people therefore have a very difficult time finding a path to understanding the various aspects of this world. The different aspects of the spiritual world about which I am going to speak only concern God's administration and sovereignty; I am not revealing any mysteries, nor am I telling you any of the secrets that you wish to learn. Because this concerns God's sovereignty, God's administration,

and God's provision, I therefore shall only speak of the part that it is necessary for you to know.

First, let Me ask you a question: In your mind, what is the spiritual world? Broadly speaking, it is a world outside the material world, one that is both invisible and intangible to people. In your imagination, though, what kind of world should the spiritual world be? Perhaps, as a result of not being able to see it, you are incapable of thinking about it. However, when you hear some legends, you are still thinking about it, and you can't stop thinking about it. Why do I say this? There is something that happens to a lot of people when they are young: When someone tells them a frightening story—about ghosts, or souls—they feel terrified out of their wits. Why exactly are they scared? It is because they are imagining those things; even though they cannot see them, they feel that they are all around their rooms, in some hidden or dark corner, and they are so frightened that they do not dare go to sleep. Especially at night, they feel too afraid to be alone in their rooms or to venture alone into their courtyards. That is the spiritual world of your imagination, and it is a world that people think is frightening. The fact is that everyone imagines it to some extent, and everyone can feel it a little.

Let us begin with talking about the spiritual world. What is it? Let Me give you a short and simple explanation: The spiritual world is an important place, one that is different from the material world. Why do I say that it is important? We are going to discuss this in detail. The existence of the spiritual world is inextricably linked to the material world of mankind. It plays a major role in the cycle of human life and death in God's dominion over all things; this is its role, and this is one of the reasons that its existence is important. Because it is a place that is indiscernible to the five senses, no one can accurately judge whether the spiritual world exists or not. Its various dynamics are intimately connected to human existence, as a result of which the order of life of mankind is also hugely influenced by the spiritual world. Does this involve God's sovereignty or not? It does. When I say this, you understand why I am discussing this topic: It is because it concerns God's sovereignty, as well as His administration. In a world such as this—one that is invisible to people—its every heavenly edict, decree, and administrative system is far above the laws and systems of any nation of the material world, and no being living in this world would dare to contravene or violate them. Does this relate to God's sovereignty and administration? In the spiritual world, there are clear administrative decrees, clear heavenly edicts, and clear statutes. At different levels and in various areas, attendants strictly abide by their duties and observe rules and regulations, for they know what the consequence of violating a heavenly edict is; they are clearly aware of how God punishes evil and rewards good, and of how He administers and rules over all things. Moreover, they clearly see how He carries out His heavenly edicts and statutes. Are these different from the material world inhabited by mankind? They are indeed enormously different. The spiritual world is a world that is completely different to the material world. Since there are heavenly edicts and statutes, this touches upon God's sovereignty, administration

and, moreover, His disposition, as well as what He has and is. Having heard this, do you not feel that it is highly necessary for Me to speak of this topic? Do you not wish to learn the secrets inherent to it? (Yes, we do.) Such is the concept of the spiritual world. Although it coexists with the material world, and is simultaneously subject to God's administration and sovereignty, God's administration and sovereignty of this world are far stricter than those of the material world. When it comes to details, we should begin with how the spiritual world is responsible for the work of mankind's cycle of life and death, for this is a major part of the work of the beings of the spiritual world.

Among mankind, I categorize all people into three types. The first are the unbelievers, who are those without religious beliefs. They are called unbelievers. The overwhelming majority of unbelievers only have faith in money; they only uphold their own interests, are materialistic, and only believe in the material world—they do not believe in the cycle of life and death, or in anything said about deities and ghosts. I categorize these people as unbelievers, and they are the first type. The second type includes the various people of faith apart from the unbelievers. Among mankind, I divide these people of faith into several major groups: The first are Jewish, the second are Catholic, the third are Christian, the fourth are Muslim, and the fifth are Buddhist; there are five kinds. These are the various kinds of people of faith. The third type includes those who believe in God, and this includes you. Such believers are those who follow God today. These people are divided into two kinds: God's chosen people, and the service-doers. These main types have been clearly differentiated. Thus, you are now able to clearly differentiate in your minds between the types and rankings of humans, are you not? The first type is comprised of unbelievers, and I have said what they are. Do those who have faith in the Old Man in the Sky count as unbelievers? Many unbelievers only believe in the Old Man in the Sky; they believe that the wind, rain, thunder, and so on are all controlled by this entity on whom they rely for the planting of crops and the harvest—yet when belief in God is mentioned, they are unwilling to believe in Him. Can this be called having faith? Such people are included among the unbelievers. You understand this, right? Do not mistake these categories. The second type includes people of faith, and the third type are those who are currently following God. Why, then, have I divided all humans into these types? (Because the various types of people have different ends and destinations.) That is one aspect of it. When these various races and types of people return to the spiritual world, they will each have a different place to go and will be subject to various laws of the cycle of life and death, so that is why I have categorized humans into these major types.

a. The Cycle of Life and Death of the Unbelievers

Let us begin with the cycle of life and death of the unbelievers. After dying, a person is taken away by an attendant from the spiritual world. Exactly what of a person is taken away? Not one's flesh, but one's soul. When one's soul is taken away, one arrives at a

place that is an agency of the spiritual world that specially receives the souls of people who have just died. That is the first place anyone goes after dying, which is strange to the soul. When they are taken to this place, an official carries out the first checks, confirming their name, address, age, and all their experiences. Everything they did while they were alive is recorded in a book and verified for accuracy. After it has all been checked, the person's behavior and actions throughout their life are used to determine whether they will be punished or continue being reincarnated as a human, which is the first stage. Is this first stage frightening? It is not too frightening, because the only thing that has happened is the person has arrived at a dark and unfamiliar place.

In the second stage, if this person has done a lot of bad things throughout their life and committed many wicked deeds, then they will be taken to a place of punishment to be dealt with. That will be the place expressly used for the punishment of people. The specifics of how they are punished depend on the sins they have committed, as well as on how many wicked things they did before they died—this is the first situation that occurs in this second stage. Because of the bad things they did and the evil they committed before they died, when they are reincarnated after their punishment—when they are once more born into the material world—some people will continue to be human, while others will become animals. That is to say, after a person returns to the spiritual world, they are punished because of the evil they have committed; moreover, because of the wicked things they have done, in their next reincarnation they probably will not return as a human, but as an animal. The range of animals that they might become includes cows, horses, pigs, and dogs. Some people could be reborn as birds, or ducks or geese.... After they have been reincarnated as animals, when they die again, they will return to the spiritual world. There, as before, based on their behavior prior to their deaths, the spiritual world will decide whether or not they are reincarnated as humans. Most people commit too much evil, and their sins are too grievous, so they have to incarnate as animals seven to twelve times. Seven to twelve times—is that not frightful? (It's frightful.) What frightens you? A person becoming an animal—that is terrifying. And for a person, what are the most painful things about becoming an animal? Having no language, having only simple thoughts, only being able to do the things that animals do and eat the food that animals eat, having the simple mindset and body language of an animal, not being able to walk upright, not being able to communicate with humans, and the fact that none of the behavior or activities of humans bear any relation to animals. That is, among all things, being an animal makes you the lowest of all living beings and involves a great deal more suffering than does being a human. This is one aspect of the spiritual world's punishment of those who have done much evil and committed great sins. When it comes to the severity of their punishment, this is decided depending on whatever kind of animal they become. For example, is being a pig better than being a dog? Does a pig live better or worse than a dog? Worse, right? If people become cows or horses, will they live better or worse than they would as pigs? (Better.) Will a person

be more comfortable being reborn as a cat? He would be an animal just the same, and being a cat would be much easier than being a cow or horse, because cats get to laze away most of their time in slumber. Becoming a cow or horse is more laborious. Therefore, if a person is reincarnated as a cow or horse, they have to work hard—which is akin to harsh punishment. Becoming a dog would be a little better than becoming a cow or horse, because a dog has a closer relationship with its master. Some dogs, after being pets for several years, are able to understand a lot of what their masters say. Sometimes, a dog can adapt to its master's mood and requirements and the master treats the dog better, and the dog eats and drinks better, and when it is in pain, it is looked after more. Does the dog not then enjoy a happy life? Thus, being a dog is better than being a cow or horse. In this, the severity of a person's punishment determines how many times one is reincarnated as an animal, as well as which type.

Because they committed so many sins while they were alive, some people are punished by being reincarnated as animals seven to twelve lifetimes. Having been punished enough times, upon returning to the spiritual world, they are taken somewhere else—a place in which the various souls have already been punished and are of the type who are preparing to be reincarnated as humans. In this location, each soul is categorized by type according to what kind of family they will be born into, what sort of role they will play once they have been reincarnated, and so on. For example, some people will become singers when they come to this world, so are placed among singers; some will become businesspeople when they come to this world, and so they are placed among businesspeople; and if someone is to become a scientific researcher after becoming human, then they are placed among scientific researchers. After they are classified, each is sent out according to a different time and appointed date, just as people send e-mails today. In this will be completed one cycle of life and death. From the day that a person arrives in the spiritual world up until the end of their punishment, or until they have been reincarnated as an animal many times and are preparing to be reincarnated as a human, this process is complete.

As for those who are done being punished and are not reincarnated as animals, will they quickly be sent to the material world to incarnate as humans? Or, how long will it be before they can arrive among humans? What is the frequency with which this can happen? There are temporal restrictions to it. Everything that happens in the spiritual world is subject to the precise temporal restrictions and rules—which, if I explain with numbers, you will understand. For those who are reincarnated within a short period of time, when they die, preparations will already have been made for them to reincarnate as humans. The shortest time in which this can happen is three days. For some people, it takes three months, for some it takes three years, for some it takes thirty years, for some it takes three hundred years, and so on. So, what can be said about these temporal rules, and what are their specifics? They are based on what the material world—the world of man—needs from a soul, and on the role that this soul is meant to

play in this world. When people are reincarnated as ordinary humans, most of them are reincarnated very quickly, because the world of man has a pressing need for such ordinary people—and so, three days later, they are sent out again to a family that is completely different from the one they were in before they died. However, there are some who play a special role in this world. "Special" means that there is not a great demand for these people in the world of man; not many people are needed to play such a role, so it may take three hundred years. In other words, this soul will only come once every three hundred years, or even just once every three thousand years. Why is this? It is due to the fact that for either three hundred or three thousand years, such a role is not required in the world of man, so they are kept somewhere in the spiritual world. Take Confucius, for example: He had a profound impact on traditional Chinese culture, and his arrival deeply affected the culture, knowledge, tradition, and ideology of the people of that time. However, a person such as this is not needed in every era, so he had to remain in the spiritual world, waiting there for three hundred or three thousand years before being reincarnated. Because the world of man was not in need of someone like this, he had to wait idly, for there were very few roles such as his, and very little for him to do. As such, he had to be kept somewhere in the spiritual world for most of that time, idle, to be sent out once the world of man had need of him. Such are the spiritual realm's temporal rules for the frequency with which most people are reincarnated. Whether people are ordinary or special, the spiritual world has appropriate rules and correct practices for processing their reincarnations, and these rules and practices are sent down from God, not decided or controlled by any attendant or being of the spiritual world. You understand this now, right?

For any soul, its reincarnation, what its role is in this life, what family it is born into, and what its life is like are closely related to the soul's previous lifetime. All kinds of people come into the world of man, and the roles they play vary, as do the tasks they carry out. And what tasks are these? Some people have come to repay debts: If they owed others too much money in their past lives, they come to repay those debts in this life. Some people, meanwhile, have come to collect debts: They were scammed out of too many things and too much money in their previous lifetimes; as a result, after they arrive in the spiritual world, it gives them justice and allows them to collect their debts in this lifetime. Some people have come to repay debts of gratitude: During the previous lifetime—that is, their previous reincarnation—someone was kind to them, and due to having been given the great opportunity to be reincarnated in this life, they are reborn to repay those debts of gratitude. Others, meanwhile, have been reborn into this life to claim lives. And whose lives do they claim? They claim that of the people who killed them in their previous lives. In sum, every person's present life bears a strong connection to their previous lifetimes; this connection is inseverable. That is to say, every person's present life is hugely affected by the previous one. For example, let us say that before he died, Zhang cheated Li out of a large amount of money. Does Zhang then owe Li a

debt? He does, so is it then natural that Li should collect his debt from Zhang? As a result, after they die, there is a debt between them that must be settled. When they are reincarnated and Zhang becomes human, how does Li collect his debt from him? One method is to be reborn as Zhang's son; Zhang earns a large amount of money, which is then squandered by Li. No matter how much money Zhang earns, his son Li squanders it. No matter how much Zhang earns, it is never enough; and meanwhile, his son, for some reason, always ends up spending his father's money by various means. Zhang is mystified, wondering, "Why does this son of mine always bring such bad luck? Why is it that other people's sons are so well-behaved? Why does my own son have no ambition, why is he so useless and incapable of earning any money, and why do I always have to support him? Since I have to support him, I will—but why is it that no matter how much money I give him, he always needs more? Why is he incapable of doing an honest day's work, and instead does all kinds of things such as loafing around, eating, drinking, whoring, and betting? What on earth is going on?" Zhang then thinks for a while, "It could be that I owe him a debt from a previous lifetime. Well then, I'll pay it off! This won't end until I pay it in full!" The day might come when Li really has recouped his debt, and by the time he is in his forties or fifties, he might suddenly come to his senses, realizing, "I haven't done a single good thing in the entire first half of my life! I've squandered all the money my father earned, so I should start being a good person! I'll steel myself; I'll be someone who is honest and lives properly, and I will never bring grief to my father again!" Why does he think this? Why does he suddenly change for the better? Is there a reason for this? What is the reason? (It is because Li has collected his debt; Zhang has paid his debt.) In this, there is cause and effect. The story began long, long ago, before their current lifetimes; this story of their past lives has been brought to the present, and neither can blame the other. No matter what Zhang taught his son, his son never listened nor did an honest day's work. Yet on the day the debt was repaid, there was no need to teach his son—he naturally understood. This is a simple example. Are there many such examples? (Yes, there are.) What does it tell people? (That they should be good and not commit evil.) That they should do no evil, and that there will be retribution for their wrongdoings! Most unbelievers commit much evil, and their wrongdoings are met with retribution, correct? However, is such retribution arbitrary? For every act, there is a background and a reason behind its retribution. Do you think nothing will happen to you after you have cheated someone out of money? Do you think that after having swindled that money away, you will not face any consequences? Such would be impossible; there will indeed be consequences! Regardless of who they are or whether or not they believe that there is a God, all individuals must take responsibility for their own behavior and bear the consequences of their actions. With regard to this simple example—Zhang's being punished, and Li's being repaid—is this not fair? When people do such things, this is the sort of result that occurs. It is inseparable from the administration of the spiritual world. Despite their being unbelievers, the existence of those who do not believe in God is subject to these sorts of heavenly edicts and decrees. No one can escape from them, and no one can avoid this reality.

Those who have no faith often believe that everything visible to humans exists, while everything that cannot be seen, or which is very distant from people, does not. They prefer to believe that there is no "cycle of life and death," and that there is no "punishment"; as such, they sin and commit evil without compunction. Afterward, they are punished, or they reincarnate as animals. Most of the various sorts of people among unbelievers fall into this vicious circle. This is because they do not know that the spiritual world is strict in its administration of all living beings. Whether you believe or not, this fact exists, for not a single person or object can escape the scope of what God observes with His eyes, and not a single person or object can escape the rules and limitations of His heavenly edicts and decrees. Thus, this simple example tells everyone that regardless of whether or not you believe in God, it is unacceptable to sin and commit evil, and that all actions bear consequences. When someone who cheated another out of money is punished, such punishment is fair. Commonly seen behavior such as this is penalized in the spiritual world, and such punishment is delivered by the decrees and heavenly edicts of God. Therefore, grievously criminal and wicked behavior—raping and looting, fraud and deception, theft and robbery, murder and arson, and so on—is even further subject to an array of punishments of varying severity. What do these punishments of varying severity include? Some of them establish the level of severity using time, whereas some do so through differing methodologies; still others do by determining where people go when they are reincarnated. For example, some people are foul-mouthed. What does being "foul-mouthed" refer to? It means frequently swearing at others and using malicious language that curses others. What does malicious language signify? It indicates that the person has a malicious heart. Foul language that curses others often comes from the mouths of such people, and such malicious language brings severe consequences. After these people have died and received the appropriate punishment, they may be reborn as mutes. Some people are very calculating while still alive; they often take advantage of others, their little schemes are particularly well-planned, and they do much harm to people. When they are reborn, it could be as half-wits or people who are mentally disabled. Some people often peer into the private business of others; their eyes see much that they should not have been privy to, and they learn much that they ought not to know. As a result, when they are reborn, they may be blind. Some people are very nimble when they are alive; they often fight and do much that is evil. Because of this, they might be reborn disabled, lame, or missing an arm; otherwise they might reincarnate as hunchbacks or wrynecks, walk with a limp, have one leg shorter than the other, and so on. In these, they have been subjected to various punishments based on the levels of evil they committed while alive. Why do you think some people have lazy eye? Are there many such people? These days there are more than just a few. Some people have lazy eye because in their past lives, they made too much use of their eyes and did too many bad things, so they were born into this life with lazy eye, and in serious cases, they were even born blind. This is retribution! Some people get on well with others before they die; they do many good things for their relatives, friends, colleagues, or the people connected to them. They give charity and care to others, or assist them financially, and people think very highly of them. When such people return to the spiritual world, they are not punished. For an unbeliever to not be punished in any way means they were a very good person. Instead of believing in the existence of God, they only believe in the Old Man in the Sky. Such a person only believes that there is a spirit above them, watching everything they do—that is all this person believes in. The result is that this person is much better-behaved. Such people are kindhearted and charitable, and when they ultimately return to the spiritual world, it will treat them very well, and they will soon be reincarnated. When they are reborn, what sorts of families will they arrive in? Though such families will not be rich, they will be free from any harm, with harmony among their members; there, these reincarnated people will pass safe, happy days, and everyone will be joyous and live good lives. When these people reach adulthood, they will have large, extended families, their children will be talented and enjoy success, and their families will enjoy good fortune—and such an outcome is hugely connected to these people's past lives. That is, where people go after they die and are reincarnated, whether they are male or female, what their missions are, what they will go through in life, what setbacks they will endure, what blessings they will enjoy, whom they will meet, and what will happen to them—no one can predict these things, avoid them, or hide from them. Which is to say, once your life has been set, whatever happens to you—however you try to avoid it, and by whatever means—you have no way of violating the life course that God set out for you in the spiritual world. For when you are reincarnated, your life's fate has already been set. Whether it be good or bad, everyone should face up to this and keep moving forward. This is an issue that no one who lives in this world can avoid, and no issue is more real. You have all understood everything I have been saying, right?

Having understood these things, have you now seen that God has very exacting and rigorous checks and administration for the cycle of life and death of unbelievers? Firstly, He has established various heavenly edicts, decrees, and systems in the spiritual realm, and once these have been declared, they are very strictly carried out, as set by God, by beings in various official positions in the spiritual world, and no one would dare violate them. Therefore, in the cycle of life and death of mankind in the world of man, whether someone is reincarnated as an animal or a human, there are laws for both. Because these laws come from God, no one dares to break them, nor is anyone able to break them. It is only due to this sovereignty of God, and because such laws exist, that the material world that people see is regular and orderly; it is only because of this sovereignty of God that humans are able to coexist peacefully with the other world that is completely invisible to them, and able to live in harmony with it—all of which is inextricable from

God's sovereignty. After a person's fleshly life dies, the soul still has life, and so what would happen if it were not under God's administration? The soul would wander all over the place, intruding everywhere, and would even harm the living things in the human world. Such harm would not only be done to mankind but could also be done to plants and animals—however, the first to be harmed would be people. Were this to happen—if such a soul were without administration, genuinely harmed people, and actually did wicked things—then this soul would also be properly handled in the spiritual world: If things were serious, the soul would soon cease to exist, and would be destroyed. If possible, it would be placed somewhere and then reincarnated. That is to say, the spiritual world's administration of various souls is ordered, and is carried out in accordance with steps and rules. It is only because of such administration that the material world of man has not fallen into chaos, that the humans of the material world possess a normal mentality, a normal rationality, and an ordered fleshly life. Only after mankind has such a normal life will those who live in the flesh be able to continue to thrive and reproduce throughout the generations.

What do you think of the words you have just heard? Are they new to you? What sort of impressions have today's topics of fellowship left you with? Apart from their novelty, do you feel anything else? (People should be well-behaved, and we can see that God is great and should be revered.) (Having just heard God's communion about how God arranges the ends of various types of people, in one regard I feel that His disposition does not allow any offense, and that I should revere Him; in another regard, I'm aware of what sort of people God likes, and what sort He doesn't, so I want to be one of those that He likes.) Do you see that God is principled in His actions in this area? What are the principles by which He acts? (He sets people's ends according to all that they do.) This is about the various ends for the unbelievers of which we just spoke. When it comes to unbelievers, is the principle behind God's actions one of rewarding the good and punishing the wicked? Are there any exceptions? (No.) Do you see that there is a principle behind God's actions? Unbelievers do not actually believe in God, nor do they submit to His orchestrations. In addition, they are unaware of His sovereignty, much less do they acknowledge Him. More seriously, they profane against God, and curse Him, and are hostile toward those who believe in God. Despite this attitude of theirs toward God, His administration of them still does not deviate from His principles; He administers them in an orderly manner, in accordance with His principles and His disposition. How does He regard their hostility? As ignorance! As a result, He has caused these people—that is, the vast majority of unbelievers—to reincarnate as animals in the past. So, in God's eyes, what exactly are unbelievers? They are all beasts. God administers beasts as well as mankind, and for such people He has the same principles. Even in His administration of these people, His disposition can still be seen, as can His laws behind His dominion over all things. And so, do you see God's sovereignty in the principles by which He administers the unbelievers I just mentioned?

Do you see God's righteous disposition? (We do.) In other words, no matter which out of all the things He deals with, God acts according to His own principles and disposition. This is God's essence; He would never casually break with the decrees or heavenly edicts that He has set just because He regards such people as beasts. God acts on principle, not recklessly in the least, and His actions are totally unaffected by any factor. Everything He does abides by His own principles. This is because God possesses the essence of God Himself; this is an aspect of His essence not possessed by any created being. God is conscientious and responsible in His handling of, approach to, management of, administration of, and ruling over every object, person, and living thing among all the things He created, and in this, He has never been careless. To those who are good, He is gracious and kind; upon those who are wicked, He inflicts remorseless punishment; and for the various living beings, He makes appropriate arrangements in a timely and regular manner according to the varying requirements of the human world at different times, such that these various living beings are reincarnated according to the roles they play in an orderly manner and move between the material world and spiritual world in a methodical way.

The death of a living being—the termination of a physical life—signifies that the living being has passed from the material world into the spiritual world, whereas the birth of a new physical life signifies that a living being has come from the spiritual world into the material world and begun to undertake and play its role. Whether it be the departure or arrival of a being, both are inseparable from the work of the spiritual world. By the time someone comes into the material world, suitable arrangements and definitions have already been formed by God in the spiritual world as to which family that person will go to, the era in which they will arrive, the hour at which they will arrive, and the role they will play. As such, this person's entire life—the things they do, and the paths they take will proceed according to the arrangements made in the spiritual world, without the slightest deviation. Furthermore, the time when a physical life terminates and the manner and place in which it ends are clear and discernable to the spiritual world. God rules the material world, and He also rules the spiritual world, and He will not delay a soul's normal cycle of life and death, nor could He ever commit any errors in the arrangements of that cycle. Each of the attendants in the official posts of the spiritual world carries out their individual tasks, and does that which they ought to do, in accordance with the instructions and rules of God. Thus, in the world of mankind, every material phenomenon beheld by man is in order, and contains no chaos. All of this is due to God's orderly rule over all things, as well as the fact that His authority rules over everything. His dominion includes the material world that man lives in and, moreover, the invisible spiritual world behind mankind. Therefore, if humans wish to have a good life, and hope to live in nice surroundings, in addition to being provided with the entire visible material world, they must also be provided with the spiritual world, which no one can see, which governs every living being on behalf of mankind, and which is orderly. Thus, having said that God is the source of life for all things, have we not heightened our awareness and understanding of "all things"? (Yes.)

b. The Cycle of Life and Death of the Various People of Faith

We just discussed the cycle of life and death of people in the first category, the unbelievers. Now, let us discuss that of the second category, the various people of faith. "The cycle of life and death of the various people of faith" is yet another very important topic, and it is highly necessary for you to have some understanding of it. First, let us speak of which faiths the "faith" in "people of faith" refers to: the five major religions of Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, and Buddhism. In addition to the unbelievers, the people who believe in these five religions occupy a large proportion of the world's population. Among these five religions, those who have made a career out of their faith are few, yet these religions have many followers. They will go to a different place when they die. "Different" from whom? From the unbelievers—the people of no faith—whom we were just talking about. After they die, the believers of these five religions go elsewhere, somewhere different from the unbelievers. However, it is still the same process; the spiritual world will likewise judge them based on all that they did before they died, after which they will be processed accordingly. Why, though, are these people sent to a different location to be processed? There is an important reason for this. What is it? I will explain it to you with an example. Before I do, however, you might be thinking to yourselves: "Maybe it's because they have a little belief in God! They're not total unbelievers." However, this is not the reason. There is a very important reason that they are kept apart from others.

Take Buddhism, for example. I will tell you a fact. A Buddhist is, firstly, someone who has converted to Buddhism, and this is a person who knows what their belief is. When Buddhists cut their hair and become monks or nuns, it means that they have separated themselves from the secular world, leaving behind the clamor of the human world. Every day, they recite the sutras and chant the Buddhas' names, eat only vegetarian food, live ascetic lives, and pass their days accompanied only by the cold, weak light of a butter lamp. They spend their entire lives like this. When a Buddhist's physical life is over, they will make a summary of their life, but in their heart they will not know where they will go after they die, who they will meet, or what their outcome will be: Deep down, they will not have a clear idea of such things. They will have done nothing more than blindly carry a sort of faith throughout their entire life, after which they depart from the human world along with their blind wishes and ideals. Such is the termination of a Buddhist's physical life, when they leave the world of the living; after that, they return to their original place in the spiritual world. Whether or not this person is reincarnated to return to earth and continue their self-cultivation depends on their behavior and practice prior to their death. If they did nothing wrong during their lifetime, they will quickly be reincarnated and sent back to earth again, where this person will once more become a monk or nun. That is,

they practice self-cultivation during their physical life in line with how they practiced selfcultivation the first time, and then return to the spiritual realm after their physical life is concluded, where they are examined. After that, if no problems are found, they can return once more to the world of man and again convert to Buddhism, thus continuing their practice. After being reincarnated three to seven times, they will once more return to the spiritual world, where they go after each physical life is over. If their various qualifications and behavior in the human world have been in keeping with the heavenly edicts of the spiritual world, then from this point onward, they will remain there; they will no longer be reincarnated as human, nor will there be any risk of them being punished for evildoing on earth. They will never again have to go through this process. Rather, depending on their circumstances, they will take up a position in the spiritual realm. This is what Buddhists refer to as "attaining Buddhahood." The attainment of Buddhahood chiefly means achieving fruition as an official of the spiritual world and, thereafter, no longer reincarnating or being at risk of being punished. Moreover, it means no longer suffering the afflictions of being human after reincarnation. So, is there still any chance of them being reincarnated as an animal? (No.) This means that they will remain to take up a role in the spiritual world and will no longer be reincarnated. This is one example of attaining the fruition of Buddhahood in Buddhism. As for those who do not attain fruition, upon their return to the spiritual world, they become subject to the examination and verification of the relevant official, who discovers that while still alive, they had not diligently practiced self-cultivation or been conscientious in reciting the sutras and chanting the Buddhas' names as prescribed by Buddhism, and instead had committed many evil acts and engaged in a lot of wicked behavior. Then, in the spiritual world, a judgment is made about their evildoing, and following that, they are sure to be punished. In this, there are no exceptions. As such, when can such a person attain fruition? In a lifetime in which they commit no evil-when, after returning to the spiritual world, it is seen that they did nothing wrong before they died. They then continue to reincarnate, carrying on with reciting the sutras and chanting the Buddhas' names, passing their days with the cold, weak light of a butter lamp, refraining from killing any living thing or eating any meat. They do not partake in the world of man, leaving its troubles far behind and having no disputes with others. In the process, if they have committed no evil, then after they return to the spiritual world and all of their actions and behavior have been examined, they are once more sent out into the human realm, in a cycle that continues for three to seven times. If no misconduct is committed during this time, then their attainment of Buddhahood will remain unaffected, and will not be delayed. This is a feature of the cycle of life and death of all people of faith: They are able to "attain fruition," and to take up a position in the spiritual world; this is what makes them different from unbelievers. Firstly, while they are still living on earth, how do those who are able to assume a position in the spiritual world conduct themselves? They must be sure not to commit any evil at all: They must not murder, commit arson, rape, or plunder; if they

engage in fraud, deception, theft, or robbery, then they cannot attain fruition. In other words, if they have any connection or affiliation with evildoing whatsoever, they will not be able to escape punishment meted out to them by the spiritual world. The spiritual world makes suitable arrangements for Buddhists who attain Buddhahood: They may be assigned to administer those who appear to believe in Buddhism, and in the Old Man in the Sky—they may be allocated a jurisdiction. They may also only be in charge of the unbelievers or have positions with very minor duties. Such allocation happens according to the various natures of their souls. This is an example of Buddhism.

Among the five religions of which we have spoken, Christianity is relatively special. What makes Christians so special? These are people who believe in the true God. How can those who believe in the true God be listed here? In saying that Christianity is a kind of faith, it undoubtedly would only have to do with faith; it would merely be a kind of ceremony, a kind of religion, and be a completely different thing from the faith of those who genuinely follow God. The reason I have listed Christianity among the five major religions is that it has been reduced to the same level as Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam. Most people here do not believe there is a God, or that He rules over all things; much less do they believe in His existence. Instead, they merely employ the Scriptures to discuss theology and use theology to teach people to be kind, to endure suffering, and to do good things. That is the kind of religion Christianity has become: It only concentrates on theological theories, bearing absolutely no relation to God's work of managing and saving man. It has become a religion of people who follow God but who are not actually acknowledged by God. However, God also has a principle in His approach to such people. He does not casually handle or deal with them at will as He does with the unbelievers. He treats them the same as He treats Buddhists: If, while living, a Christian can exercise self-discipline, strictly abide by the Ten Commandments and make demands of their own behavior in accordance with the laws and commandments, and adhere to them their entire lives, then they also must spend the same amount of time going through the cycles of life and death before they can truly attain the so-called "rapture." After achieving this rapture, they remain in the spiritual world, where they take up a position and become one of its officials. Likewise, if they commit evil on earth—if they are too sinful and commit too many sins—then they will inevitably be punished and disciplined with varying severity. In Buddhism, attaining fruition means passing on to the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss, but what do they call it in Christianity? It is called "entering heaven" and being "raptured." Those who are truly raptured also go through the cycle of life and death three to seven times, after which, having died, they come to the spiritual world, as if they had fallen asleep. If they are up to standard, they can remain there to take up a position and, unlike the people on earth, will not be reincarnated in a simple way or according to convention.

Among all these religions, the end of which they speak and for which they strive is the same as the attainment of fruition in Buddhism; it is just that this "fruition" is achieved by different means. They are all birds of a feather. For this portion of followers of these religions, who are able to strictly abide by religious precepts in their behavior, God provides a suitable destination, a suitable place to go to, and handles them appropriately. All of this is reasonable, but it is not as people imagine. Now, having heard about what happens to people in Christianity, how do you feel? Do you feel that their plight is unfair? Do you sympathize with them? (A little.) There is nothing that can be done; they have only themselves to blame. Why do I say this? God's work is true; He is alive and real, and His work is aimed at all mankind and every individual. Why, then, do they not accept this? Why do they so frantically oppose and persecute God? They should consider themselves lucky to even have this sort of outcome, so why do you feel sorry for them? Their being handled in this way shows great tolerance. Given the extent to which they oppose God, they should be destroyed, yet God does not do this; He instead simply handles Christianity the same as any ordinary religion. Thus, is there any need to go into further detail about the other religions? The ethos of all these religions is for people to suffer more hardship, do no evil, do good deeds, not swear at others, not pass judgment on others, distance themselves from disputes, and be good people—most religious teachings are like this. Therefore, if these people of faith—these followers of various religions and denominations—are able to strictly abide by their religious precepts, then they will not commit great errors or sins during the time that they are on earth; and, after being reincarnated for three to seven times, these people—the ones who are able to strictly abide by religious precepts—will, by and large, remain to take up a position in the spiritual world. Are there many such people? (No, there are not.) What do you base your answer on? It is not easy to do good and to abide by religious rules and laws. Buddhism does not allow people to eat meat—could you do that? If you had to wear gray robes and recite sutras and chant the Buddhas' names in a Buddhist temple all day, could you do it? It would not be easy. Christianity has the Ten Commandments, the commandments and laws; are these easy to abide by? They are not, right? Take not swearing at others, for example: People are simply incapable of abiding by this rule. Unable to stop themselves, they swear—and after swearing, they cannot take those words back, so what do they do? At night, they confess their sins. Sometimes after they swear at others, they still harbor hatred in their hearts, and they even go so far as to plan out a time to do further harm to those people. In short, for those who live among this dead dogma, it is not easy to refrain from sinning or committing evil. Therefore, in every religion, only a handful of people are actually able to attain fruition. Do you assume that because so many people follow these religions, a good portion will be able to remain to take up a role in the spiritual realm? There are not that many; only a few are actually able to achieve this. That is generally it for the cycle of life and death of people of faith. What sets them apart is that they can attain fruition, and this is what sets them apart from unbelievers.

c. The Cycle of Life and Death of God's Followers

Next, let us speak of the cycle of life and death of those who follow God. This concerns you, so pay attention: First, think about how God's followers can be categorized. (God's chosen ones, and the service-doers.) There are indeed two: God's chosen ones, and the service-doers. First, let us talk about God's chosen ones, of whom there are but a few. Whom does "God's chosen ones" refer to? After God created all things and mankind came into existence, God selected a group of people who would follow Him; these are simply referred to as "God's chosen." There was a special scope and significance to God's selection of these people. The scope is special in that it was limited to a select few, who must come when He does important work. And what is the significance? Since they were a group selected by God, the significance is great. That is, God wishes to complete these people, and perfect them, and once His work of management is finished. He will gain these people. Is this significance not great? Thus, these chosen ones are of great importance to God, for they are the ones whom God intends to gain. As for the service-doers, well, let us take a break for a moment from the subject of God's predestination, and first talk of their origins. A "service-doer" is literally one who serves. Those who serve are transient; they do not do so long-term or forever, but are hired or recruited temporarily. The origin of most of them is that they were selected from among the unbelievers. They came to earth when it was decreed that they would assume the role of service-doers in God's work. They may have been animals in the previous lifetime, but they may also have been unbelievers. Such are the origins of the service-doers.

Let us talk further of God's chosen people. When they die, they go to a completely different location from that of the unbelievers and various people of faith. It is a place where they are accompanied by angels and God's messengers; it is a place that is personally administered by God. Even though God's chosen people cannot behold God with their own eyes in this place, it is unlike anywhere else in the spiritual realm; this is a different location, where this portion of people go after they die. When they die, they, too, are subject to a stringent investigation by God's messengers. And what is investigated? God's messengers investigate the paths these people have taken throughout their lives in their belief in God, whether or not they ever opposed God or cursed Him during that time, and whether or not they committed any grievous sins or evil. This investigation will settle the question of whether a particular person is allowed to stay or must leave. What does "leave" mean? And what does "stay" mean? "Leave" means whether, based on their behavior, they remain among the ranks of God's chosen ones; being allowed to "stay" means that they can remain among the ones who will be made complete by God during the last days. For those who stay, God has special arrangements. During each period of His work, He will send such people to act as apostles or to do the work of reviving or tending to the churches. However, people who

are capable of such work are not reincarnated as frequently as unbelievers, who are reborn generation after generation; rather, they are returned to earth in accordance with the requirements and steps of God's work, and they are not reincarnated frequently. So are there any rules to when they are reincarnated? Do they come once every few years? Do they come with such frequency? They do not. This is all based on God's work, on its steps and on His needs, and there are no set rules. The only rule is that when God does the final stage of His work during the last days, these chosen people will all come, and this coming will be their last reincarnation. And why is that? This is based on the outcome to be achieved during God's last stage of work—for during this last stage of work, God will make these chosen ones entirely complete. What does this mean? If, during this final phase, these people are made complete and perfected, then they will not be reincarnated as before; their process of being human will have come to a complete finish, as will their process of reincarnation. This relates to those who will stay. So where do those who cannot stay go? Those who are not allowed to stay have their own appropriate destination. First of all, as a result of their evildoing, the mistakes they have made, and the sins they have committed, they, too, will be punished. After they have been punished, God will either make arrangements to send them out among the unbelievers as befits the circumstances, or arrange for them to go among the various people of faith. In other words, there are two possible outcomes for them: One is being punished and perhaps living among the people of a certain religion after being reincarnated, and the other is becoming unbelievers. If they become unbelievers, then they will lose all opportunity; however, if they become people of faith—if, for example, they become Christians—then they will still have a chance to return among the ranks of God's chosen people; there are very complex relationships to this. In short, if one of God's chosen people does something that offends God, they will be punished just like everybody else. Take Paul, for example, whom we previously talked about. Paul is an example of a person who is being punished. Are you getting an idea of what I am talking about? Is the scope of God's chosen ones fixed? (It is, mostly.) Most of it is fixed, but a small part of it is not fixed. Why is that? Here I have referred to the most obvious reason: committing evil. When people commit evil, God does not want them, and when God does not want them, He throws them among various races and types of people. This leaves them without hope and makes it difficult for them to return. All of this relates to the cycle of life and death of God's chosen ones.

This next topic relates to the cycle of life and death of service-doers. We just talked about the origins of service-doers; that is, the fact that they were reincarnated after having been unbelievers and animals in their previous lifetimes. With the arrival of the last stage of work, God has selected from the unbelievers a group of such people, and this group is special. God's aim in choosing these people is for them to serve His work. "Service" is not a very elegant-sounding word, nor is it in line with everyone's wishes, but we should look at whom it is aimed at. The existence of God's service-doers has a

special significance. No one else could play their role, for they were chosen by God. And what is the role of these service-doers? It is to serve God's chosen ones. For the most part, their role is to give service to God's work, to cooperate with it, and to accommodate God's completion of His chosen ones. Regardless of whether they are laboring, carrying out some aspect of work, or undertaking certain tasks, what is God's requirement of these service-doers? Is He very demanding in His requirements of them? (No, He asks only that they be loyal.) Service-doers, too, must be loyal. Regardless of your origins or why God selected you, you must be loyal to God, to any commissions God entrusts to you, and to the work for which you are responsible and the duties you perform. For service-doers who are capable of being loyal and satisfying God, what will their outcomes be? They will be able to remain. Is it a blessing to be a service-doer who remains? What does it mean to remain? What is the significance of this blessing? In status, they seem unlike God's chosen ones; they seem different. But in fact, is what they enjoy in this life not the same as that of God's chosen ones? At the very least, it is the same in this lifetime. You do not deny this, do you? God's utterances, God's grace, God's provision, God's blessings—who does not enjoy these things? Everyone enjoys such abundance. The identity of a service-doer is one who does service, but to God, they are just one among all the things that He created; it is simply that their role is that of service-doer. Being that they are both God's creatures, is there any difference between a service-doer and one of God's chosen? In effect, there is not. Nominally speaking, there is a difference; in essence and in terms of the role they play, there is a difference—but God does not treat this group of people unfairly. So why are these people defined as service-doers? You must have some understanding of this! Service-doers come from among the unbelievers. As soon as we mention that they come from among the unbelievers, it is apparent that they share a bad background: They are all atheists, and were so in the past, too; they did not believe in God, and were hostile to Him, to the truth, and to all things positive. They did not believe in God or in His existence. As such, are they capable of understanding God's words? It is fair to say that to a large extent, they are not. Just as animals are incapable of understanding human words, servicedoers cannot understand what God is saying, what He requires, or why He makes such demands. They do not understand; these things are incomprehensible to them, and they remain unenlightened. For this reason, these people do not possess the life of which we have spoken. Without the life, can people understand the truth? Are they equipped with the truth? Do they have experience and knowledge of God's words? (No.) Such are the origins of service-doers. However, since God makes these people service-doers, there are still standards to His requirements of them; He does not look down upon them, nor is He perfunctory toward them. Even though they do not comprehend His words and are not in possession of the life, God still treats them kindly, and there are still standards when it comes to His requirements of them. You just spoke of these standards: Being loyal to God and doing what He says. In your service, you must serve where needed,

and you must serve to the very end. If you can be a loyal service-doer, are able to serve right up to the very end and can fulfill the commission entrusted to you by God, then you will live a life of value. If you can do this, you will be able to remain. If you put in a bit more effort, if you try a bit harder, can redouble your endeavors to know God, can speak a little about knowing God, can bear testimony to Him, and, moreover, if you can understand something of His will, can cooperate in God's work, and can be somewhat mindful of God's intentions, then you, as a service-doer, will experience a change in fortune. And what will this change in fortune be? You will no longer simply be able to remain. Depending on your conduct and your personal aspirations and pursuits, God will make you one of the chosen ones. This will be your change in fortune. For service-doers, what is the best thing about this? It is that they can become God's chosen. If they do so, it means that they will no longer be reincarnated as animals the way unbelievers are. Is that good? It is, and it is also good news: It means that service-doers can be molded. It is not the case that for a service-doer, once God has predestined them to serve, they will do so forever; that is not necessarily so. God will handle them and respond to them in a way that befits this person's individual conduct.

However, there are service-doers who are unable to serve to the very end; there are those who, during their service, give up halfway and forsake God, as well as people who commit multiple wrongdoings. There are even those who cause tremendous harm and bring tremendous losses to God's work, and there are even service-doers who curse God and so on. What do these irremediable consequences indicate? Any such evil acts will signify the termination of their services. Because your conduct during your service has been overly poor and because you have gone too far, once God sees that your service is not up to standard, He will strip you of your eligibility to serve. He will no longer allow you to serve; He will remove you from before His very eyes and from the house of God. Is it that you do not want to serve? Are you not constantly wanting to do evil? Are you not consistently unfaithful? Well then, there is an easy solution: You will be stripped of your eligibility to serve. To God, stripping a service-doer of their eligibility to serve means that this service-doer's end has been proclaimed, and they will no longer be eligible to serve God. God has no further need of this person's service, and no matter what nice things they might say, those words will be in vain. When things have gotten to this point, the situation will have become irremediable; service-doers like these will have no way back. And how does God deal with service-doers such as this? Does He merely stop them from serving? No. Does He merely prevent them from remaining? Or, does He put them to one side and wait for them to make a turn-around? He does not. God is not so loving when it comes to service-doers, truly. If a person has this kind of attitude in their service to God, God will, as a result of this attitude, strip them of their eligibility to serve, and will once more toss them back among the unbelievers. And what is the fate of a service-doer who has been tossed back among the unbelievers? It is the same as that of the unbelievers: They will be reincarnated as an animal and receive the same

punishment in the spiritual world as an unbeliever. Moreover, God will not take any personal interest in this person's punishment, for such a person no longer has any relevance to God's work. This is not only the end of their life of faith in God, but also the end of their own fate, as well as the proclamation of their fate. Thus, if service-doers serve poorly, they will have to bear the consequences themselves. If a service-doer is incapable of serving to the very end, or is stripped of their eligibility to serve midway, then they will be thrown among the unbelievers—and if this happens, such a person will be dealt with in the same way as livestock, in the same way as people without intellect or rationality. When I put it like that, you can understand, yes?

The aforementioned is how God handles the cycle of life and death of His chosen ones and the service-doers. After having heard this, how do you feel? Have I ever spoken of this topic before? Have I ever spoken on the subject of God's chosen ones and the service-doers? I actually have, but you do not remember. God is righteous toward His chosen people and the service-doers. In all regards, He is righteous. Is there anywhere you can find fault in this? Are there not people who will say, "Why is God so tolerant toward the chosen ones? And why is He only a little forbearing toward servicedoers?" Does anyone wish to stand up for the service-doers? "Can God give the servicedoers more time, and be more forbearing and tolerant toward them?" Is it right to voice such a question? (No, it is not.) And why not? (Because we have actually been shown favor just through the act of being made service-doers.) Service-doers have actually been shown favor simply by being allowed to serve! Without the title of "service-doers," and without the work they do, where would these people be? They would be among the unbelievers, living and dying with the livestock. What great graces they enjoy today, being allowed to come before God and come to the house of God! This is such a tremendous grace! If God did not give you the opportunity to serve, you would never have the chance to come before Him. To say the least, even if you are someone who is a Buddhist and has attained fruition, at most, you are but a gofer in the spiritual world; you will never meet God, hear His voice or His words, or feel His love and blessings, nor could you ever possibly come face-to-face with Him. The only things Buddhists have before them are simple tasks. They cannot possibly know God, and they just comply and obey, whereas the service-doers gain so much during this stage of work! Firstly, they are able to come face-to-face with God, hear His voice, hear His words, and experience the graces and blessings that He bestows upon people. Furthermore, they are able to enjoy the words and truths bestowed by God. Service-doers truly gain so much! Thus, if, as a service-doer, you cannot even put forth a proper effort, then can God still keep you? He cannot keep you. He does not ask much of you, yet you do nothing that He asks properly; you have not adhered to your duty. As such, without a doubt, God cannot keep you. Such is God's righteous disposition. God does not mollycoddle you, but neither does He discriminate against you. These are the principles by which God acts. God treats all people and creatures in this manner.

When it comes to the spiritual world, if the various beings in it do something wrong or do not do their jobs correctly, God also has corresponding heavenly edicts and decrees with which to deal with them; this is absolute. Therefore, during God's severalthousand-year management work, some duty-doers who committed wrongdoings have been exterminated, while some—to this very day—are still being detained and punished. This is what must be faced by every being in the spiritual world. If they do something wrong or commit evil, then they are punished—and this is the same as God's approach to His chosen ones and the service-doers. Thus, in both the spiritual world and the material world, the principles by which God acts do not change. Whether or not you can see God's actions, their principles do not change. Throughout, God has had the same principles in His approach to everything and in His handling of all things. This is immutable. God will be kind toward those among the unbelievers who live in a relatively proper manner, and will save opportunities for those in each religion who behave well and do no evil, allowing them to play their roles in all the things managed by God and do that which they ought to do. Similarly, among those who follow God, and among His chosen people, God does not discriminate against any person according to these principles of His. He is kind toward everyone who is able to sincerely follow Him, and He loves everyone who sincerely follows Him. It is just that for these several types of people—unbelievers, the various people of faith, and God's chosen ones—that which He bestows upon them varies. Take the unbelievers, for example: Although they do not believe in God, and God sees them as beasts, among all things each of them has food to eat, a place of their own, and a normal cycle of life and death. Those who do evil are punished, and those who do good are blessed and receive God's kindness. Is this not how it is? For people of faith, if they are able to strictly abide by their religious precepts through rebirth after rebirth, then after all those reincarnations, God will ultimately make His proclamation to them. Similarly, for you today, whether you are one of God's chosen or a service-doer, God will likewise bring you into line and determine your outcome in accordance with the regulations and administrative decrees that He has set. Among these types of people, the different types of people of faith—that is, the ones who belong to various religions—has God given them space in which to live? Where are the Jews? Has God interfered in their faith? He has not. And what about Christians? He has not interfered with them, either. He allows them to abide by their own procedures, He does not talk to them or give them any enlightenment and, moreover, He does not reveal anything to them. If you think it is right, then believe in this way. Catholics believe in Mary, and that it was through her that the news was passed on to Jesus; such is their form of belief. Has God ever corrected their faith? He gives them free rein; He pays them no heed and gives them a certain space in which to live. With regard to Muslims and Buddhists, is He not the same? He has set boundaries for them, too, and allows them to have their own living space, without interfering in their respective beliefs. All is wellordered. And what do you see in all this? That God is possessed of authority, but He does not abuse it. God arranges all things in perfect order and does it in an orderly manner, and herein lies His wisdom and omnipotence.

Today we have touched upon a new and special topic, one concerning matters of the spiritual world, which represents one aspect of God's administration of and dominion over that realm. Before you understood these things, you may have said, "Everything to do with this is a mystery, and has nothing to do with our entry into life; these things are divorced from how people actually live, and we do not need to understand them, nor do we wish to hear of them. They have absolutely no connection with knowing God." Now, do you think there is a problem with such thinking? Is it correct? (No.) Such thinking is not right and has serious problems. The reason for this is that if you wish to comprehend how God rules over all things, you cannot simply and only understand that which you can see and what your way of thinking can grasp; you must also understand some of the other world, that may be invisible to you but which is inextricably linked to this world that you can see. This concerns God's sovereignty, and it concerns the topic, "God is the source of life for all things." It is information about that. Without this information, there would be flaws and deficiencies in people's knowledge of how God is the source of life for all things. Thus, what we have spoken of today can be said to have rounded off our previous topics, as well as concluding the content of "God is the source of life for all things." Having understood this, are you now able to know God through this content? More importantly, today I have passed on to you a very crucial piece of information concerning service-doers. I know that you really enjoy listening to topics such as this, and that you really care about these things. Do you therefore feel satisfied with what I have talked about today? (Yes, we do.) Some of the other things may not have made a very strong impression on you, but what I have said about service-doers has made a particularly strong impression, for this topic touches the soul of every one of you.

God's Requirements of Mankind

a. The Identity and Status of God Himself

We have come to the end of the topic of "God is the source of life for all things," as well as that of "God is the unique God Himself." Having done so, we need to sum things up. What kind of summary must we make? It is a conclusion about God Himself. That being the case, it must have an inevitable connection to every aspect of God, as well as to how people believe in God. And so, first I have to ask you: Having heard these sermons, who is the God in your mind's eye? (The Creator.) The God in your mind's eye is the Creator. Is there anything else? God is the Lord of all things. Are these words appropriate? (Yes.) God is the One who rules over all things and administers all that there is, He administers all that there is, He rules over all that there is, and He provides for all that there is. This is the status of God, and it is His identity. For all things and all that there is, God's true identity is the Creator and the Ruler of all of creation. Such is the identity possessed by God, and He is unique among all things.

None of God's creatures—whether they be among mankind or in the spiritual world can use any means or excuse to impersonate or replace God's identity and status, for there is only One, among all things, who is possessed of this identity, power, authority, and ability to rule over creation: our unique God Himself. He lives and moves among all things; He can rise to the highest place, above all things. He can humble Himself by becoming human, becoming one among those of flesh and blood, coming face-to-face with people and sharing weal and woe with them, while at the same time, He commands all that there is, deciding the fate of all that there is and in what direction it all moves. Moreover, He guides the fate of all mankind, and steers the direction of mankind. A God such as this should be worshiped, obeyed, and known by all living beings. Thus, regardless of which group or type among mankind you belong to, believing in God, following God, revering God, accepting His rule, and accepting His arrangements for your fate is the only choice—the necessary choice—for any person and for any living being. In God's uniqueness, people see that His authority, His righteous disposition, His essence, and the means by which He provides to all things are all completely unique; this uniqueness determines the true identity of God Himself, and it also determines His status. Therefore, among all creatures, if any living being in the spiritual world or among mankind wished to stand in God's stead, success would be impossible, as would be that of any attempt to impersonate God. This is fact. What are the requirements of mankind of a Creator and Ruler such as this, who is possessed of the identity, the power, and the status of God Himself? This should be clear to everyone, and should be remembered by everyone; this is very important to both God and man!

b. Mankind's Various Attitudes Toward God

How people behave toward God decides their fate, as well as how God will behave toward them and deal with them. At this point, I am going to give some examples of how people behave toward God. Let us listen and see whether the manners and attitudes with which they conduct themselves before God are correct or not. Let us consider the conduct of the following seven types of people.

- 1) There is a type of person whose attitude toward God is particularly absurd. These people think God is like a Bodhisattva or a holy being of human lore, and needs humans to bow three times whenever they meet each other and light incense after each meal. As a result, whenever they feel extremely thankful for His grace and feel gratitude toward Him, they often have this sort of impulse. They so wish that the God they believe in today can, like the holy being they yearn for in their hearts, accept the way they bow three times upon meeting and light incense after every meal.
- 2) Some people see God as a living Buddha capable of delivering all the living from suffering and saving them; they see Him as a living Buddha capable of taking them away from the sea of affliction. These people's belief in God entails worshiping Him as a Buddha. Although they do not light incense, kowtow, or give offerings, deep down, they

feel that God is just such a Buddha who only asks that they are kind and charitable, that they kill no living thing, refrain from swearing at others, live a life that appears honest, and commit no wrongdoings. They believe that these things are all that He asks of them; this is the God in their hearts.

- 3) Some people worship God as though He were someone great or famous. For example, by whatever means this great person likes to speak, with whatever intonation he speaks, what words and vocabulary he uses, his tone, his hand gestures, his opinions and actions, his bearing—they copy all of them, and these are things that they must come to fully engender in the course of their belief in God.
- 4) Some people see God as a monarch, feeling that He is above all else and that no one dares to offend Him—and that if anyone does, that person will be penalized. They worship such a monarch because monarchs hold a certain place in their hearts. Their thoughts, manner, authority, and nature—even their interests and personal life—all become something these people feel they must understand; they become issues and matters about which they are concerned. As a result, they worship God as a monarch. Such a form of belief is ridiculous.
- 5) Some people have particular faith in the existence of God, and this faith is profound and unwavering. Because their knowledge of God is so superficial, however, and they do not have much experience of His words, they worship Him as an idol. This idol is the God in their hearts; it is something that they feel they must fear and bow down to, and which they must follow and imitate. They see God as an idol that they must follow their whole life. They copy the tone in which God speaks and, externally, they imitate those whom God likes. They often do things that appear naive, pure, and honest, and they even follow this idol as though it were a partner or companion that they can never part with. Such is their form of belief.
- 6) There is one type of people who, despite having read many of God's words and heard much preaching, feel deep down that the only principle behind their behavior toward God is that they should always be obsequious and fawning, or that they should praise God and commend Him in a way that is unrealistic. They believe that God is a God who requires them to behave in such a way. Moreover, they believe that if they do not do so, then at any time they may provoke His anger or stumble into sin against Him, and that as a result of this sinning, God will punish them. Such is the God they keep in their hearts.
- 7) And then there are the majority of people, who find spiritual sustenance in God. This is because they live in this world, they are without peace or happiness, and nowhere do they find comfort. Once they find God, after they have seen and heard His words, they begin to harbor secret joy and elation in their hearts. This is because they believe that they have finally found a place that will make their spirits happy, and that they have finally found a God who will give them spiritual sustenance. After they have accepted God and begun to follow Him, they become happy, and their lives are fulfilled. They no

longer act like the unbelievers, who sleepwalk through life like animals, and they feel they have something to look forward to in life. Thus, they think that this God can hugely satisfy their spiritual needs and bring them great happiness in both mind and spirit. Without realizing it, they become unable to leave this God who gives them such spiritual sustenance, and who brings happiness to their spirits and to all the members of their families. They believe that a belief in God need bring nothing more than spiritual sustenance.

Do any among you possess these various aforementioned attitudes toward God? (Yes.) If, in their belief in God, a person's heart harbors any of those attitudes, are they able to truly come before God? If someone has any of these attitudes in their heart, do they believe in God? Does such a person believe in the unique God Himself? (No.) Since you do not believe in the unique God Himself, who do you believe in? If what you believe in is not the unique God Himself, then it is possible that you believe in an idol, or a great man, or a Bodhisattva, or that you worship the Buddha that is in your heart. Moreover, it is possible that you believe in an ordinary person. In short, because of people's various forms of belief and attitudes toward God, they place the God of their own cognitions in their hearts, impose their imagination upon God, place their attitudes and imaginings about God side-by-side with the unique God Himself, and, afterward, hold them up to be consecrated. What does it mean when people have such improper attitudes toward God? It means that they have rejected the true God Himself and are worshiping a false god; it indicates that while believing in God, they are rejecting and opposing Him, and that they are in denial of the existence of the true God. If people keep holding onto such forms of belief, what consequences will they face? With such forms of belief, will they be able to draw ever closer to fulfilling God's requirements? (No, they will not.) On the contrary, because of their notions and imaginings, they will stray ever farther from God's way, for the direction they seek is the opposite of the direction God requires them to take. Have you ever heard the story of "going south by driving the chariot north"? This may well be just such a case of going south by driving the chariot north. If people believe in God in such a ludicrous fashion, then the harder you try, the farther you will get from God. As such, I admonish you thusly: Before you get going, you must first discern whether you are actually going in the right direction. Be focused in your efforts, and be sure to ask yourselves, "Is the God I believe in the Ruler of all things? Is the God I believe in merely someone that gives me spiritual sustenance? Is He simply my idol? What does this God I believe in ask of me? Does God approve of everything I do? Are all my actions and pursuits in line with seeking to know God? Do they accord with His requirements of me? Is the path I walk recognized and approved of by God? Is He satisfied with my faith?" You should often and repeatedly ask yourself these questions. If you wish to seek knowledge of God, then you must have a clear consciousness and clear objectives before you can succeed in satisfying Him.

Is it possible that, as a result of His tolerance, God might grudgingly accept these

improper attitudes of which I have just spoken? Could God commend these people's attitudes? (No.) What are God's requirements of humans and of those who follow Him? What sort of attitude does He require people to have? Do you have a clear idea of these? At this point, I have said so much; I have spoken a great deal on the topic of God Himself, as well as about His deeds and what He has and is. Do you now know what God wishes to gain from people? Do you know what He wants from you? Speak up. If your knowledge from experiences and practice is still lacking or still very superficial, then you can say something about your knowledge of these words. Do you have a summary knowledge? What does God ask of man? (During these several communions, God has made a point of requiring that we know Him, know His deeds, know that He is the source of life for all things, and be acquainted with His status and identity.) And, when God asks that people know Him, what is the ultimate outcome? (They understand that God is the Creator, and that humans are created beings.) When people attain such knowledge, what changes are there in their attitude toward God, in their performance of duty, or in their life dispositions? Have you ever thought about this? Could it be said that, upon knowing God and understanding Him, they become good people? (Belief in God does not involve seeking to be a good person. Rather, it is the pursuit of becoming a creature of God who is up to par, and of being an honest person.) Is there anything else? (After truly and correctly knowing God, we are able to treat Him as God; we know that God is always God, that we are created beings, that we should worship God, and that we should stay in our proper places.) Very good! Let us hear from some others. (We know God, and are ultimately able to be people who truly submit to God, revere God, and shun evil.) That is correct!

c. The Attitude That God Requires Mankind to Have Toward Him

Actually, God is not very demanding of mankind—or, at least, He is not as demanding as people imagine. If God had not uttered any words, and if He had not expressed His disposition or any deeds, then knowing God would be extremely difficult for you, for people would have to infer His intention and will; this would be very hard to do. However, in the final stage of His work, God has spoken many words, done a great amount of work, and made many requirements of man. In His words, and His great amount of work, He has informed people of what He likes, what He loathes, and of what kind of people they should be. After understanding these things, people should have an accurate definition in their hearts of God's requirements, for they do not believe in God in vagueness and no longer believe in a vague God, nor do they have faith in God amidst vagueness or nothingness. Rather, they are able to hear His utterances, understand the standards of His requirements, and attain them, and God uses the language of mankind to tell them all that they should know and understand. Today, if people still do not know what God is and what He requires of them; if they do not know why one should believe in God, nor how to believe in Him or treat Him—then there is a problem with this. Just

now, each of you spoke of one particular area; you are aware of some things, whether these things are specific or general. However, I wish to tell you the correct, complete, and specific requirements God has of mankind. They are just a few words, and very simple; you may already know them. God's correct requirements of mankind and those who follow God are as follows. He requires five things of those who follow Him: true belief, loyal following, absolute submission, genuine knowledge, and heartfelt reverence.

In these five things, God requires that people no longer question Him or follow Him using their imaginations or vague and abstract viewpoints; they must not follow God based on any imaginings or notions. He requires that every one of those who follow Him do so loyally, not half-heartedly or without commitment. When God makes any requirements of you, tests you, judges you, deals with you and prunes you, or disciplines and smites you, you should submit to Him absolutely. You should not ask the cause or make conditions, much less should you speak of reasons. Your obedience must be absolute. Knowledge of God is the area in which people are most lacking. They often impose upon God sayings, utterances, and words that are unrelated to Him, believing that such words are the most accurate definition of the knowledge of God. Little do they know that these sayings, which come from the human imagination, their own reasoning, and their own knowledge, bear not the slightest relation to God's essence. Thus, I want to tell you that, when it comes to the knowledge God desires for people to have, He does not merely ask that you recognize Him and His words, but also that your knowledge of Him is correct. Even if you can only say one sentence, or are only aware of a tiny bit, this tiny bit of awareness is correct and true, and is compatible with the essence of God Himself. This is because God detests any praise or commendation of Him that is unrealistic or ill-considered. More than that, He hates it when people treat Him like air. He hates it when, during discussion of topics about God, people speak with no regard for the facts, talking at will and without hesitation, speaking however they see fit; moreover, He hates those who believe they know God and are boastful about their knowledge of Him, discussing topics related to Him with neither constraint nor reservation. The last of those aforementioned five requirements was heartfelt reverence: This is God's ultimate requirement of all those who follow Him. When someone possesses a correct and true knowledge of God, they are able to truly revere God and shun evil. This reverence comes from the depths of their heart; this reverence is given willingly, and not a result of pressure from God. God does not ask that you make a gift of any nice attitude, conduct, or outward behavior to Him; rather, He asks that you revere Him and fear Him in the depths of your heart. Such reverence is attained as a result of changes in your life disposition, of gaining knowledge of God and an understanding of God's deeds, of coming to understand God's essence, and of your acknowledgment of the fact that you are one of God's creatures. Therefore, My aim in using the word "heartfelt" to define reverence here is for humans to understand that their reverence for God should come from the bottom of their hearts.

Now consider those five requirements: Are any among you capable of attaining the first three? By this, I am referring to true belief, loyal following, and absolute submission. Are any among you capable of these things? I know that if I said all five, there would unquestionably be none among you who are, but I have reduced the number to three. Have a think about whether you have achieved these things or not. Is "true belief" easy to attain? (No, it is not.) It is not easy, for people often question God. And how about "loyal following"? What does this "loyal" refer to? (Not being half-hearted, but instead being wholehearted.) Not being half-hearted, but wholehearted. You have hit the nail on the head! So, are you capable of achieving this requirement? You have got to try harder, right? At the moment, you have yet to succeed in this requirement. What about "absolute submission"—have you achieved that? (No.) You have not achieved that, either. You are frequently disobedient and rebellious; you often do not listen, do not wish to obey, or do not want to hear. These are the three most fundamental requirements people meet after attaining entry into life, but you have yet to achieve them. Thus, at the moment, do you have great potential? Today, having heard Me say these words, do you feel anxious? (Yes.) It is right that you should feel anxious. Do not try to avoid being anxious. I feel anxious on your behalves. I will not go into the other two requirements; without doubt, no one here is capable of achieving them. You are anxious. So, have you determined your objectives? With what objectives, and in what direction, should you pursue and devote your efforts? Do you have an objective? Let Me speak plainly: Once you have achieved these five requirements, you will have satisfied God. Each of them is an indicator, as well as a final objective, of the maturation of a person's entry into life. Even if I only picked a single one of these requirements to speak of in detail, and require you to meet it, it would not be easy to achieve; you must endure a certain degree of hardship and put in a certain amount of effort. What sort of mentality should you have? It should be the same as that of a cancer patient waiting to go onto the operating table. Why do I say this? If you wish to believe in God, and if you wish to gain God and gain His satisfaction, then unless you endure a certain degree of pain and put in a certain amount of effort, you will not be able to achieve these things. You have heard much preaching, but simply having heard it does not mean that this sermon is yours; you must absorb it and transform it into something that belongs to you. You must assimilate it into your life and bring it into your existence, allowing these words and preaching to guide the way you live and bring existential value and meaning to your life. When that happens, your hearing these words will have been worth it. If the words I speak do not bring about any upturn in your lives or add any value to your existences, then there is no point in your listening to them. You understand this, right? Having understood it, what happens next is up to you. You must get to work! You must be earnest in all things! Do not be at sixes and sevens; time is flying by! Most among you have already believed in God for more than a decade. Look back on these past ten years: How much have you gained? And how many decades do you have left to live in this lifetime? You do not have long. Forget about whether God's work awaits you, whether He has left you a chance, or whether He will do the same work again—speak not of these things. Can you reverse the course of the past ten years of your life? With every day that passes, and with every step you take, you have one fewer day. Time waits for no one! You will only gain from your faith in God if you approach it as the greatest thing in your life, more important than even food, clothes, or anything else. If you only believe when you have the time, and are incapable of devoting your entire attention to your faith, and if you are always mired in confusion, then you will gain nothing. You understand this, right? We will stop here for today. See you next time!

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